

**SEXUAL INTER-SUBJECTIVITY AND THE QUEST FOR  
SOCIAL WELL-BEING: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY OF  
ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY IN URBAN SOUTHERN TANZANIA**

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Die Dekanin Prof. Dr. Barbara Schellewald

Dedicated to my lovely wife Seraphia; my dear children Evan and Jacqueline; and my  
beloved parents.

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## **Abbreviations**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMREF	African Medical and Research Foundation
BMAF	Benjamin Mkapa HIV/AIDS Foundation
BEST	Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
CIBA	Chemische Industrie Basel
CD	Compact Disc
CMA	Critical Medical Anthropology
DANIDA	Danish International Development Assistance
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EASA	European Association of Social Anthropologists
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IT	Information Technology
MARGs	Most At Risk Groups
MARPs	Most At Risk Persons/populations
MEDA	Mennonite Economic Development Associates
NBS:	National Bureau of Statistics
NHRERC	National Health Research Ethics Review Committee
NIMR	National Institute of Medical Research
OAU	Organisation of African Union
PASHA	Prevention and Awareness in Schools against HIV and AIDS
RIPS	Rural Integrated Project Support
RTD	Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam
SAUT	St. Augustine University of Tanzania
SCIH	Swiss Centre for International Health
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STI	Swiss Tropical Institute
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections

TANESCO	Tanzania Electrical Supply Company
TBC	Tanzania Broadcasting Company
TCU	Ten Cell Unit
TGSPH	Tanzanian German Programme to Support Health
TTCL	Tanzania Telecommunication Company Limited
TNR	Tanganyika Notes and Records
UK	United Kingdom
UMATI	Uzazi na Malezi Bora Tanzania
UMCA	Universities Missions to Central Africa
UMISSETA	Umoja wa Michezo ya Shule za Sekondari Tanzania
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNFPA	United Nations Population Funds
UNICEF	United Nation Children's Funds
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
VETA	Vocational Education and Training Authority
WAMA	Wanawake na Maendeleo
WB	The World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation



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## **Abstract**

This study explores what sexuality means for individual adolescents, by examining how and why adolescents go about engaging with multiple social and cultural prescriptions or ideals in relation to their sexual lives. Grounded in the refined conceptualization of agency, the study approaches adolescents as “agents” in themselves and their sexual or reproductive practices as “social actions”. Based on ethnographic methods, the study focuses on sexual and reproductive experiences of adolescents in Mtwara Town, Southern Tanzania. Central to the analysis is the understanding of sexual and reproductive actions from the adolescents’ viewpoints. Findings show that sexual practices during adolescence in Mtwara Town constitute contested social phenomena as they are simultaneously disapproved and endorsed by different social actors and institutions. In their quest for social well-being, adolescents inter-subjectively engage with multiple, competing and often contradictory sexual norms and expectations along with their own aspirations. Fundamentally, sanctions and rewards attached to adolescents’ sexual practices articulate different forms of social reputation. Accordingly, sexual respectability is among the key concerns in adolescents’ sexual practices. Situational shifting between and/or simultaneously combining two or more sexual formations are common in most of the adolescents’ lived experiences. Moreover, adolescent sexual activities are enacted for different purposes rather than simply performed as mere behaviours compelled by some physical or mental urge, or habits. The expectations that adolescents project into sexual partnership(s) constitute horizons or resolutions of hopes and fears (or “risk” dimensions) which are often in contrast with the dominant sexual and reproductive health risk discourses. Equally important, social spaces for adolescents’ sexual practices are enmeshed, or interwoven, in socially and culturally pre-established practices. In spite of the dominant tendencies in policy and scholarly discourses to represent adolescents’ sexual practices in universal, essentialist and normative terms, sexuality means different things for different young people coming of age in the rapidly changing urban settings of Southern Tanzania. A nuanced understanding of adolescent sexual practices from the actors’ standpoints is a pre-requisite for adequate intervention programmes.

## **1. ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

It is widely espoused that anthropology's interest in the study of human sexuality has been rejuvenated since the late 1980s (Vance 1991, Parker 2001, Lyons & Lyons 2011). Likewise, adolescents<sup>1</sup>, one of the social and generational categories that attracted attention of prominent anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century (see Malinowski 1927, Mead 1928, Schapera 1933), have become the largest group in history (Bearinger et al. 2007:1220). They form up to twenty per cent of the current seven billion people in the world (UNFPA 2011). In Africa, young people not only “constitute the majority of the population” but they are also at “the centre of societal interactions and transformation” (De Boeck and Honwana 2005:1).

Consequently, particular aspects of adolescents' social lives have been subject to research and interventions. Specifically, and of concern in the present study, is the fact that adolescents' sexual and reproductive health issues have attracted much attention of scholars and practitioners. For instance, in the past two decades, adolescent sexuality and reproduction have become major health and development “problems” in Tanzania, elsewhere in Africa, and globally (Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001, Bearinger et al. 2007, Plummer et al. 2008, UNICEF 2011).

Understanding sexual and reproductive actions from the adolescents' point of view is critical in any effort to promote their (adolescents) sexual and reproductive health (see Nichter 2008, van Reeuwijk 2010). Although much is known about their (adolescents) “vulnerability” to so-called sexual and reproductive health risks (see, for example, Bearinger et al. 2007, UNICEF 2011), the complexity inherent in adolescents' lived sexual and reproductive experiences remains unclear. This study is an attempt towards closing the research gap. It explores what sexuality means for individual adolescents by examining how and why an adolescent acts in certain ways in particular situations, and not others.

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<sup>1</sup> Adolescents have been narrowly defined by the United Nations in terms of chronological age to entail individuals between ten and nineteen years (see Bearinger et al. 2007). In this study I focus on individual young people in adolescence – the latter consisting of lived experiences.

## **1.1 The central argument**

Mundane struggles to live in multiple “temporal and relational contexts” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998:970) are a common characteristic of social life. This is true for all social actors regardless of their prescribed social positions and subsequent patterns of actions. In regard to adolescent sexual lives, adolescents growing up in rapidly changing societies, particularly in the contemporary urbanizing and globalizing social settings in Tanzania and Africa in general, have to grapple with competing and often contradictory sexual norms and expectation (see Fuglesang 1994, Obrist van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997, Liljeström et al. 1998, Dilger 2003, Wight et al. 2006, Rweyemamu 2007, Halley 2012). The situation, I claim, provides a unique opportunity to explore agentic and creative dimensions of adolescents’ social actions (sexual and reproductive practices inclusive).

In their day to day life, young people coming of age in the above settings, move back and forth: from families to schools, churches or mosques, visiting friends and relatives; hanging out in streets, nightclubs, disco and video shows and other leisure places. Similarly, young people are exposed and expose themselves to codes, trends, practices and desires and other images from mass media through watching television and listening to varied programmes on the radio (see also Rweyemamu 2007). In addition, young people are increasingly using mobile phones and Internet to interact with others and explore many things from within and outside their own localities.

Likewise, there are countless messages from governmental and non-governmental organizations (both national and international), persuading and guiding young people on issues related to health, education and life in general. Apparently these young people engage with multiple social worlds of meanings, norms, values, tastes, and images (see also Cole 2010). In anthropological and sociological terms, these young people are interacting with diverse enculturating or socializing agents such as the family, school, religion, mass media, state and peers, among others.

Interestingly however, adolescents do manage to make sense of their social lives and deal with their situations in rather more complex ways than often conceived of by scholars. At

times, they live in line with societal norms and values while in other situations they go around or even transform specific dimensions of the pre-existing social patterns. Often these practices are enacted in a creative manner, in most cases, without necessarily upsetting the seemingly hegemonic discourses and structures (cf. de Certeau 1984). Understanding how young people go about engaging with multiple social and cultural prescriptions or ideals, especially in relation to their sexual lives, is at the core of the present study.<sup>2</sup>

My basic argument is that young people in adolescence inter-subjectively engage with multiple, competing and often contradictory sexual norms and expectations. And, that adolescents' ability to "fit in" the lives of others is reflective of the diverse and rather complex practices of everyday life. Following the rhythms of the latter, they (adolescents) differently orient their actions in specific situations or contexts of their sexual encounters. As I discuss in more detail later in this chapter, I am inspired by anthropological perspectives in youth studies particularly, the most current understanding of youth or adolescence as lived experiences (see Durham 2000, Bucholtz 2002, Christiansen et al. 2006, Cole 2010).

Moreover, I am interested in an emerging anthropology of young people's sexual and reproductive health issues which questions the cultural and structural determinism in the field (see van Reeuwijk 2010). In both cases however, I contend that a nuanced understanding of young people's lived experiences demands a refined conception of agency and creativity. Accordingly, I adapt Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) sound theorization of agency as an analytical concept in its own right. In extension, I follow Joas (1996) and others who credibly see the creativity of action as situated and social in character (for details, see chapter two).

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Bucholtz, in her review of anthropological work on youth and cultural practice, observed the scarcity of ethnographic research on many aspects of youth cultural practices but maintained that there is a large body of non-ethnographic work on the subject (Bucholtz 2002: 526).

## 1.2 Defining adolescence

Just like the concept of youth (see Durham 2000, Christiansen et al. 2006), the conceptualization of adolescence within and beyond the frontiers of anthropology has been contested and controversial (see Schlegel and Barry III 1991, Bucholtz 2002, Macleod 2011). Whilst anthropologists have studied adolescence, many of the studies have been undertaken by psychoanalysts and developmental psychologists, along with sociologists (Schlegel and Barry III 1991, Bucholtz 2002). Several pertinent points have been central to the debate with far reaching implications in researching and intervening in the lives of adolescents. For the sake of the current study, I should highlight three aspects, namely: the question of universality; the “transitional” discourse; and the tension between idealized adolescence and lived experiences. In due course I will underline the conceptualization of adolescence as adapted throughout the present study, but first let me briefly sketch the three points as they play out in the literature.

To start with the question of universality, whereas psychologists view adolescence as part of human development, that is, as a psychological imperative, sociologists view it as a period of socialization for adult social roles. Thus, from a sociological point of view adolescence “may appear unnecessary in societies in which adult social roles can be learned or anticipated in childhood” (Schlegel and Barry III 1991: 3). Based on the psychologization of the anthropology of adolescence in the 1920s, adolescence was studied from a cross-cultural framework trying to compare adolescence in Western and other cultures (Bucholtz 2002). Margaret Mead, for example, made it clear that her study of adolescence in Samoa was meant to be “A psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation” (Bucholtz 2002: 528, cf. Mead 1928).

The influence of Western psychologists who conceptualize adolescence as a “preparation for adulthood” is also vivid in the anthropological research on young people for most of the second half of the twentieth century (Bucholtz 2002: 528, see also Johnson-Hanks 2002, Cole 2010). Robinson (1997) considers adolescence as a period of individuation and crisis. Others have emphasized gender difference but maintained that gendered patterns occur across cultures (Schlegel and Barry III 1991). The Harvard Adolescence



project, which involved multidisciplinary investigations of the physiological and sociocultural dimensions of adolescence in seven different countries, is one of “the most ambitious” ethnographic study embracing cross-cultural framework (Bucholtz 2002: 529). On both biological and social grounds, it has been argued that adolescence is a “cultural universal” not confined to modern societies as contended by sociologists (Schlegel 1995).

In public discourses, apart from other normative connotations attached to adolescents, they are regarded as “the world’s future human resource” (UN 1995: 33), hence *holding the key to the future of the nations*. In that respect, they are often framed as in need of adult protection because of their innocence and vulnerability (De Boeck and Honwana 2005). But more so because certain collective goods are inherent in their lives (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005). This view has become dominant in the international discourse about children’s rights (Christiansen et al. 2006, De Boeck and Honwana 2005). In need of universalization and a global framework of child protection, a specific understanding of childhood has been framed over the past three decades (De Boeck and Honwana 2005). In short, a child has been defined as anyone below the age of eighteen (UNICEF 1990). This is clearly stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, article one (UNICEF 1990), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted in 1990 and entered into force in 1999 (OAU 1990).

The UN Convention of the Rights of Children (CRC) provides a framework, which has come to be known as “the child rights approach” (Christiansen et al. 2006:17). The idea is for the United Nations’ members to promote the establishment and implementation of “social welfare, compulsory education, child labour legislation,<sup>3</sup> and health services throughout the world” (Christiansen et al. 2006: 17). Perhaps because of the inadequacies in the actualization of the mentioned public welfare by respective governments in Africa, several international agencies have intervened to implement universal programmes for

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<sup>3</sup> The idea is to abolish the practice of adolescents’ and children’s engagement in all paid labour. This include the kind work opportunities secured by the young people for instance in Africa, which besides earning money, provide them with space of autonomy, learning new life skills and negotiating social position (see Thorsen 2006).

young people. The idea is to rescue so-called “vulnerable” and “most-at-risk individuals” who carry the potentials for the futures of nations. This explains the influx of International agencies working on thousands of intervention programmes alongside with research targeting young people.

A common tendency in such programmes is to approach young people as “pre-social and passive recipients of experiences” (De Boeck and Honwana 2005: 3). Global discourse and practices frame young people as dependent, undeveloped and without the capacity to assume any form of responsibility. According to the discourse, these young people ought to be “confined to the protection of home and school” (De Boeck and Honwana 2005: 3, see also Christiansen et al. 2006, Comaroff and Comaroff 2005).

The major pitfall inherent in the conceptualization of adolescence as a universal stage in the biological and psychological development of the individual is that it apparently “frames young people as not-yet-finished human beings” (Bucholtz 2002: 529). This explains nicely the reason why anthropologists in the early and mid twentieth century studied adolescence “almost exclusively as a transitional or liminal position between childhood and adulthood that was marked by some forms of initiation ceremony” at least in many cultures (Bucholtz 2002: 529, see also Christiansen et al. 2006, Schlegel and Barry III 1991). The same is also echoed today in the global development and health discourses along with the “transitional” discourses to which I now turn.

The “transitional” discourse is inherent in a general agreement among many social scientists that adolescence is “a period intervening between childhood and full adulthood, during which preparation for adult occupational, marital and social class status and roles is initiated or intensified” (Schlegel and Barry III 1991: 3). Comaroff and Comaroff (2005: 22) underline that, in its modern sense, the constructions of the wall between childhood and adulthood configure adolescence or youth as “a life-phase whose liminal force could be tapped for the collective good” (see also Bucholtz 2002, Macleod 2011). However, they also make a cautionary note to avoid assuming that this is distinctive to Western societies because such practices are not new in Africa and elsewhere in the

world. Illustratively, the two Comaroffs, point to practices of confining young people to age sets, restricting them from getting married so as to serve as “foot soldiers of adult hegemony” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005: 22). Indeed, these were not limited to the young men. Ethnographic studies have also shown traditions where young women had and still have to discipline their sexualities in order to protect virginity for the sake of honour to their families (Fuglesang 1994, Bennett 2005).

Nevertheless, the Western view of adolescence has been universalized through education, religion, health interventions and employment systems, among others (see Macleod 2011). Accordingly, young people who deviate from the norm are seen to be at risk or posing a risk to the society (De Boeck and Honwana 2005). Functionalist sociologists and anthropologists would also attribute the “problem” to inadequacies in the performance of “socializing” institutions such as family, school and religion.

As a result, the many lives<sup>4</sup> of young people in Africa have drawn the attention of both researchers and development practitioners, nationally and globally. Among the aspects of young people’s life that have been heavily subjected to the global discourse, is their sexuality and reproduction, especially when it comes to adolescents.<sup>5</sup> Certain dimensions of the sexual and reproductive practices of these young people have been conceived of as “problems” that need to be fixed by sexual and reproductive health programmes. Consequently, promotion of sexual and reproductive health of adolescents, especially those in African countries, has moved to the top of the international development agenda since the 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

However, it must be born in mind that such efforts were not considered necessary and significant before in Tanzania and other non-Western societies. As it has been boldly argued by a few anthropologists (Durham 2000, Cole, 2010, Honwana and De Boeck,

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<sup>4</sup> I am consciously using the phrase *many lives* here with its double sense, whereby, on the one hand, I am referring to lives of almost fifty percent of the population in Africa. On the other, I am pointing to the diversity in experiences and practices of young people.

<sup>5</sup> Violence is another aspect; for contemporary anthropological debates about youth and violence in Africa, see De Boeck and Honwana (2005), Comaroff and Comaroff (2005), Vigh (2006), Christiansen et al. (2006).

<sup>6</sup> For a reflection on the trends in the global discourses and research practices in sexual and reproductive health, see Lane (1994), Corrà (1997), Richey (2008).

2005), sociologists (Murcott 1980), psychologists (Macleod 2011) and historians (Hanks 2000) that, as a biosocial construct, adolescence is a Western notion invented in the early twentieth century. In non-Western countries like Tanzania, adolescence, in its strict “modern” sense, is a new phenomenon gaining impetus following a series of social change engineered through education, health and employment systems (Macleod 2011).

What is clear though, both in term of research, policy and interventions, is the tendency to represent young people in adolescence as vulnerable to, and victims of, so-called sexual and reproductive health risks. Here, sexual and reproductive practices of adolescents become both public health and development “problems”. At times, young people themselves have been pathologized as a “problem” (Phoenix 1991, Macleod 2011). In trying to deconstruct one of the constructs emerging from the above problematization of adolescents’ sexuality and reproduction, scholars have questioned whether “a teenage girl problem” is a shared construct in non-Western countries like Tanzania (Obrist van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997, Chambua et al. 1994, Phoenix 1991, Macleod 2011).

The aforementioned authors are not necessarily arguing that teenage pregnancy is a desirable phenomenon, instead the critical point here is that such a normative construction informs the framing and discussion about adolescent sexuality and reproduction (Obrist van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997: 44, see also Murcott 1980, Macleod 2011). Studies have also shown that in Tanzania, early marriages were common in most communities as a means to control premarital sexuality and reproduction (see Harries 1944, Chambua et al. 1994, Halley 2012). This is also reported for the Kenyan coast (Fuglesang 1994) and other parts of Kenya and Uganda (Heald 1995) as well as for Nigeria (Smith 2006).

In short, the common tendency inherent in the transitional discourse is to approach adolescents’ actions from the perspective of adults (Bucholtz 2002: 532). Enquires that give weight to the fact that young people are social actors whose experiences need to be understood from their standpoints, are more likely to provide a nuanced understanding of

young people's social actions. This brings me to a balanced conceptualization of adolescence as lived experiences rather than a mere life stage which is socially and culturally determined.

Ultimately, viewing adolescence, or youth, as a lived experience, beyond essentializing social and cultural ideals, is gaining pivotal significance. Emerging in the last decade, this way of approaching young people constitutes perhaps one of the most remarkable advancements in the anthropology of adolescence and youth. For instance, in her effort to arrive at a comprehensive formulation of youth, Durham (2000) proposes the use of a linguistic concept of *shifter* to refer to youth as a “context-renewing and a context-creating sign whereby social relations are both and often simultaneously reproduced and contested” (Bucholtz 2002: 528). This view has been adapted in studies of youth, children and adolescents (see Honwana and De Boeck 2005, Christiansen et al. 2006, Fuh 2012).

Likewise, Mary Bucholtz has attempted an examination of the concept of adolescence and how it contrasts and connects with adulthood, both etymologically and socially. Etymologically, she found that “*adultum* is past participle of a Latin verb *adolescere*” which means “to grow up” (Bucholtz (2002: 532). Following Herdit and Leavitt (1998), she argues that historically, “the sense of growth, transition and incompleteness” is inherent in adolescent, while “both completion and completeness is indicative of adult” (Bucholtz (2002: 532). The use of the term adolescence in the social sciences has indeed reflected the aforementioned etymology. Against the psychological formulation of adolescence as a prolonged “search for identity” and the rigid essentializing conception of identity, Bulcholtz (2002:532) credibly underlines that identity (such as adolescence) is agentive, flexible and ever changing (see also Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Johnson-Hanks 2002).

In the same vein De Boeck and Honwana (2005: 4) have argued that young people in Africa “constantly cross the frontier between childhood and adulthood. As they actively create and recreate their roles in the face of changing conditions, they blur that social

divide.” Though this has been challenged for overemphasizing the discontinuity between generational categories (see Cole 2010), it unearths the fluidity and flexibility of social categories (see Bucholtz 2002).

Perhaps the most advanced version of the above conception of adolescence, or youth, as lived experiences, comes from Christiansen, Utah and Vigh’s (2006: 11). Here, youth, or adolescence, is a state of both “social being” and “social becoming” (see also Lee 2001). This means that though young people are ascribed a particular position, for instance, as “adolescents”, they do not automatically subscribe to such prescriptions, instead they (adolescents) “seek to inhabit, escape or move within the category” of adolescence “in meaningful ways”.

Based on such an understanding, Christiansen and colleagues portray young people as “agents who willingly or unwillingly, see themselves as belonging” to a particular generational category and yet strive to shape their lives in a positive way (Christiansen et al. 2006:11, see also Bucholtz 2002). I follow this conception of adolescence because of its explanatory power to bring together individual young people’s agency and social forces as a critical point of departure towards a nuanced understanding of adolescents’ sexual and reproductive practices. For an in-depth conceptual discussion, see chapter two of the present thesis.

### **1.3 The anthropology of young people and social change**

For the purpose of the present study, revisiting the anthropology of adolescence/youth allows for discerning different framings of adolescence/youth: as a mere stage, construct, or lived experience; adolescents/youths as individuals, social categories or entities; and how adolescents/youth(s) are shaped by and/or are shaping the ongoing social and cultural change in Africa. Critical insights in this regard are vital to the understanding of what it means to come of age in the midst of social transformation, a reality that most adolescents are facing in contemporary Africa (Honwana and De Boeck 2005, Christiansen et al 2006, Mains 2012).

Scholarly discourses that have informed most anthropological studies of young people since the early twentieth century are rife with controversy. In particular, at least three diverging views are evident in the anthropology of youth and social change in Africa. These include: the discontinuity framework, which stresses the contribution of youth in the crisis of social reproduction; the continuity discourse which points to the role that the young generation plays in the production and reproduction of societal norms and values; and the most recent view, which embraces elements of both continuity and discontinuity in the young people's lived experiences.

Discontinuity and cultural determinism is the first and also most common view, which stresses that, owing to their tendency to incline towards "modern" at the expense of "traditional" values, the youth in Africa are either increasingly or completely detaching themselves from the societal values and practices cherished by the parental and older generations (see also Bucholtz 2002, Cole 2010). Although it hints at the capacity of young people to challenge local cultural frameworks by taking up new values, the argument is leaky as it reduces young people to mere recipients of new cultural values, devoid of the capacity to shape and appropriate the latter. In addition, it treats youth as a cultural entity in itself and denies their membership in families and societies (see also Christiansen et al. 2006). In what follows I briefly discuss some of the literature that falls under this perspective and describe how the view has been debated.

With a strong footing in the discontinuity discourse, the concept of youth culture is eminent in many recent studies of young people in relation to contemporary social and cultural transformation in Africa and elsewhere (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005, Bucholtz 2002, Christiansen et al. 2006). Championed by the urban sociological studies of the Chicago School in the US, the perspective was well received by some scholars in the domain of cultural studies at the Birmingham School in UK (Christiansen et al. 2006, Comaroff and Comaroff 2005). Since then it has been dominant in the sociology of youth and its influence has also been felt in anthropology (Bucholtz 2002, Fuglesang 1994). Although the perspective is credited for bringing to the fore the "agentive potential and autonomy of young people" (Christiansen et al. 2006: 16), it has been attacked for

presupposing “static and inflexible cultural boundaries” (Bucholtz 2002: 539). In the words of Christiansen, Utas, and Vigh (2006), this view of youth culture “can easily paint a picture of youth as an entity” completely removed from society (Christiansen et al. 2006: 16, see also Cole 2010).

Analytically, the danger in this perspective is to approach youth as more or less autonomous actors capable of “constructing worlds of their own and living lives alienated from their social settings” (Christiansen et al. 2006: 16). In keeping with Joas (1996), I would add that such a rationalistic view presents actors devoid of a *social* character and *corporeality*, and hence produces a limited understanding of agency. This in no way means that the notion of “youth cultures” is useless, especially when it is thought in line with the critical anthropological understanding of culture today (see for example Fuglesang 1994 on female youth culture). However, the danger inherent in the notion of “culture” in general just like “structure” (see Sewell 1992) is the assumption that because they are internalized, actors (youth) simply follow or comply with the culture/structure. Such a conceptual error of omission ignores the creativity of actions (see Joas 1996, Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Advancing this point, Mary Bucholtz earlier cautioned against the tendency to confuse global flows of cultures as culminating in homogeneity. Her main point is that such cultures are appropriated (see also Hannerz 1987, Appadurai 1996). In that respect, she aptly asserts that;

“How cultural forms are taken up and assigned meanings far from their places of origin, is a process that involves creativity and agency, not unthinking acceptance of cultural products” (Bucholtz 2002:543)

The above contention highlights the key concepts at the heart of my thesis namely *agency* and *creativity*, to which I return in the next chapter. However, what Bucholtz is plausibly advancing here, is that the same cultural ideas or products are used differently by different actors, in this case, young people in different contexts and situations. Thus, rather than producing similarities, *the flows* have led to differences and diversities in the young people’s lives. This ties up with what critical anthropologists of globalization and culture have recently suggested, namely, that despite being inspired by the global cultural flows, the enactment of styles and practices preferred by youth remain local phenomena



(Bucholtz 2002, Christiansen et al. 2006, Cole 2010). However, the question remains, how do we approach and understand the actions that lead to appropriation. I will come back to this point.

Before switching to the continuity discourse, let me briefly sketch a claim that the discontinuity discourse is an upshot of the life cycle model that was first developed in psychology before it was taken up in sociology and further advanced in anthropology (cf. Johnson-Hanks 2002, Cole 2010). Most of the pioneers of the anthropology of adolescence who studied adolescent sexuality in the early twentieth century strongly embraced the life-cycle model as perfectly fitted to functionalism. The latter was the dominant perspective in anthropology at that time. To support the claim requires a brief outline of the lifecycle model.

Very briefly, from the life-cycle point of view, adolescence/youth is framed as a socially and culturally defined category in transition. In its strict sense, the life-stage model is based on the understanding that individuals' lives "conform" to pre-established social categories hence variations from such categories ought to be explained as "exceptions" or deviance (Johnson-Hanks, 2002: 866, cf. Blumer 1966). In this sense, adolescents are conceived to be in a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. Accordingly, anthropological discussions about youth and sexuality have for long focused on "culturally specific practices" (Bucholtz 2002: 534) and the degree at which adolescent premarital sexuality and reproduction are culturally encouraged, tolerated or discouraged (see for example, Schlegel and Barry III 1991).<sup>7</sup>

In effect, early studies on the subject concentrated on identifying so-called "permissive" and "restrictive" cultures (Davis and Whitten 1987: 79).<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately this was done at the expense of a comprehensive understanding of adolescents' sexual practices, one that takes into account the actor's viewpoint. The marriage between cultural/structural

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<sup>7</sup> For an overview of cross-cultural anthropological studies on adolescent sexuality, see Schlegel and Barry III (1991)

<sup>8</sup> For early anthropological studies on adolescent sexuality see Malinowski (1929), Mead (1928), Schapera (1933), Freeman (1984).

determinism and life-cycle model did not allow for a focus on young people's sexual activities beyond prescribed sexual scripts.

The influence of the life-stage model in the study of adolescent sexuality and reproduction especially from the second half of the twentieth century is far reaching. For instance, based on the ethnographic study of women's life crises in Bugisu, La Fontaine (1972) contended that childbearing is a physical event that transforms girls into women. Similarly, Fortes (1974) posited that giving birth serves to transform girls into women universally. Likewise, in her study of initiation of young girls into adulthood in Sudan, Hutchinson (1996) underlined that girls became women after they had experienced childbirth.

Against the above, and following Johnson-Hanks (2002), Ringsted (2008) asserts that such anthropological studies miss out on other dimensions of shifts outside institutionalized paths. In her study of teenage motherhood and generational relations in north-eastern Tanzania, Ringsted found out that even after giving birth teenagers did not accept the position of adult women. In addition, their own parents continued to regard them as teenagers, not adults (Ringsted 2008). This is exactly what other scholars have cautioned about the inability of the life-stage model to "illuminate the ways people strive to be included in or escape from the category of youth as well as the ways they move and are moved within the generational category" (Christiansen et al. 2006:15). Furthermore, these scholars see the risk in the life-stage model to depict young people as actors with limited "agentive capacity to change or move within or between generational categories" (Christiansen et al. 2006:16).

However, unlike Johnson-Hanks (2002) who calls for the need to disregard the life-stage model in anthropology, Christiansen et al. (2006) are of the view that issues of life stages have become part of the "emic reality" of the people, hence they should not be disregarded (Christiansen et al. (2006:15). Instead, it is crucial not to "analytically freeze people in categories that they themselves know or treat as fluid" (Christiansen et al. (2006: 15). This call points to the need to go beyond cultural and structural ideals in the

understanding of social actions enacted by actors. Emphasizing this view, Mary Bucholtz noted a decade ago that inasmuch as social categories such as adolescence, youth, adult, elderly, class and gender, among others, may seem to be rigid and fixed, they can prove to be flexible and fluid in practice (Bucholtz 2002).

Rejecting the discontinuity thesis is a relatively convincing strand in theorizing intergenerational relations stressing on continuity and sociocultural reproduction. According to this perspective, young people in Africa are situated in intergenerational relationships as agents of change, actively producing and reproducing social realities (Cole 2010, Alber et al. 2002). Since young people do not live in a social and cultural vacuum, the perspective offers a powerful analysis of young people's interactions with actors from other generations. However, it tends to downplay the capacity of youth to temporarily reject certain aspects valued by other generations, and to introduce new dimensions. Accordingly, arguments inherent in this perspective have tended to privilege continuity at the expense of equally important dimensions of discontinuity in the lived experiences of the young generation. A short survey of literature in this regard serves to illuminate the above points.

Some of the prominent works in this perspective come from Jennifer Cole who is concerned with the prominence of the discontinuity discourse in the contemporary discussion on youth and globalization. Cole (2010: 6) pointing to the work of Honwana and De Boeck (2005:2) has reminded that, "Nowhere is this emphasis on rupture more visible than in the recent studies of youth in Africa." Cole categorically posits that such images construct contemporary African youth "as cut off from an ongoing exchange between different generations, creating what other scholars have called a crisis of social reproduction" (Cole 2010: 6, see also Durham 2000, Cole and Durham 2007).

Arguing for a continuity view, Cole (2010: 19) contends that "young people interact with, and respond to people of other generations" both from within and beyond their localities. She thus proposes an approach that explores "young people's ongoing and varied relationships to the past, present, and the future" (Cole 2010: 7). Drawing on an

ethnographic study of how young women imagine their future in Madagascar, Cole (2010: 9) appeals for “the need to analyze their (youth) mode of agency and to develop a nuanced vocabulary for thinking about the issues of continuity and change” (Cole 2010: 9).

It appears that Cole’s suggestion is in line with what Durham (2000) stressed a decade before, namely, that studies of youth in Africa have got to understand the *social imagination* of the young people, specifically their own world outlook on life and how they formulate their own world. Advancing further this line of thought is the collection on generations in Africa by Erdmute Alber et al. (2008). It addresses issues of connections and conflicts in intergenerational relationships on the continent. As underlined earlier, the explanatory power of this view lies in its appreciation of the capacity of young people to reproduce structures amidst change, which means that actors can combine old and new values in forging their own futures. However, it seems to me that the model leaves very limited room for transformative possibilities endowed in the creativity of action (cf. Christiansen et al. 2006). Thus, a perspective that transcends the continuity-discontinuity dualism is needed in order to grasp young people’s social actions in their entirety. It is to this perspective that I now turn to.

Going beyond the continuity-discontinuity dualism is an emerging but plausible view grounded on the understanding of youth/adolescence as a flexible social category. Consequently, it accommodates both elements of continuity and discontinuity in young people’s social and cultural practices. It also highlights the importance of going beyond the tendency to dichotomize young people’s lives because these are both complex and dynamic. Furthermore, proponents of this view pay more attention not just on how young people are positioned but also how they seek to (re)position themselves in society. I summarize some of the key works in this perspective below.

Until a decade ago, the lived experiences of adolescents and the changes they bring about during adolescence were under-researched in the anthropology of adolescence (Bucholtz 2002). This is in keeping with the expectations that social and cultural ideals were

privileged in the anthropological theorization and ethnographic endeavors, paying little attention to reality (see also van Binsbergen 2007). What this meant is that constellations of ways through which adolescents engage with multiple contexts of their actions remained unexamined.

Since then a growing body of anthropological literature on young people is increasingly acknowledging the need to understand children and youth's experiences beyond the cultural prescriptions and structural constraints (see, for example, Johnson-Hanks 2002, 2006, Honwana and De Boeck 2005, Durham 2000, Comaroff and Comaroff 2005, Thorsen 2006). Focusing on the lives of young people in Africa, Christiansen, Utas and Vigh (2006) refer to this view as a "perspectival dualist analysis of youth" (Christiansen et al. 2006:11). According to its proponents this analysis considers the "social and experiential" dimensions of the young people as two sides of the same coin (Christiansen et al. 2006:11).

Just like Bucholtz (2002) and Johnson-Hanks (2002), Christiansen and her colleagues consider the need to free young people from the chain of fixed and stable life stages. They argue that youth is in a state of movement, which they refer to as "social being" and "social becoming" (Christiansen et al. 2006:11).<sup>9</sup> Emphasizing the agency of young people, Christiansen and her colleagues posit that individuals are active part of a "socio-generational category" (Christiansen et al. 2006:11). This means that although they are ascribed a particular position, "they seek to inhabit, escape or move within the category in meaningful ways" (Christiansen et al. 2006:11). Based on such an understanding, Christiansen et al. (2006:11) portray young people as "agents who willingly or unwillingly, see themselves as belonging" to a particular generational category and yet strive to shape their lives in a positive way.

Situating young people in intergenerational relationships and other social institutions, Christiansen et al. (2006) contend that generational categories are neither neutral nor natural but rather entail power relations manifested by "struggle for influence and

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<sup>9</sup> See also Lee (2001) on the notion of childhood as *being* and *becoming*.

authority” (Christiansen et al. 2006:12) . Avoiding the vague term “transition”, they suggest that rather than moving between “developmental positions”, individuals “move between positions of power, authority and social worth” in their life courses (Christiansen et al. 2006:12).

To illustrate the situational and contextual nature of social categories and how actors are capable of switching between positions, the authors point to the fact that even within a day a person can move between several positions such as child, youth and adult (Christiansen et al. 2006:12). I would also add here that the same young person on that same day can also move within and between such social positions as a good and bad boy/girl, student, girlfriend/boyfriend, fiancée, mother/father and wife/husband. Inspired by Durham (2004), Christiansen et al. (2006) point out that when a person begins and ends childhood is “contextually specific” and the generational positions ascribed to young people are not necessarily what they “claim or seek” and, moreover, the social positions offered to young people are not necessarily in line with what they (youth) “desire” (Christiansen et al. 2006: 12, see also Bucholtz 2002).

Indeed, this way of approaching young people leaves more room for agency and creativity on the part of social actors. As noted by Durham (2000:116), “to imagine youth, and to imagine the concept of relationally, is to imagine the grounds and forces of sociality.” Following Joas (1996), one could conclude that as social actors young people do not just happen to be social but that sociality is enmeshed in the dimensions of their agency. I will come back to this point in the theoretical backdrop as outlined in the next chapter.

Grounding the generational position of youth on the actual practice of young people, Christiansen and her colleagues advance that youth is a lived experience, not a mere social category. Inspired by Bourdieu’s theory of practice,<sup>10</sup> they assert that young people

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<sup>10</sup> I am particularly referring to Bourdieu’s seminal books, namely, *The Logic of Practice* (1990) and *Practical Reason* (1998).

invest considerable effort in trying to improve their lives, “gaining symbolic and social capital and recognition of worth” (Christiansen et al. 2006:13).

In their collection, a wide range of young people’s experiences in Africa and their imaginations are described and discussed. But two different types of experiences are evident (Christiansen et al. 2006). The first type shows youth as an aspired social position. Depicting this, Ruth Price shows how youth use popular music to express ambiguities of modernity, morality and gender relations in the era of AIDS in a Luo village of Kenya (Prince 2006). Likewise, Christian Boehm portrays the changing livelihood trajectories of young women in Lesotho (Boehm 2006).

On the other hand, the second type of experiences of youth portrays young people striving to achieve valued adulthood in different contexts, using different means. Here youth is a period of life “to be over and done with” due to its “heightened social marginalization” (Christiansen et al. 2006: 13). In particular, Henrik Vigh shows how youth actively and creatively engage with war and conflict situations in their pursuit to avoid “social death” in Guinea –Bissau (Vigh 2006: 31). In the same vein, Trond Waage examines how young people in the city of Ngaoundéré, Cameroon, strive to combine new values and roles with traditional and local ideals as they search for “respectable identities” (Waage 2006: 61). Equally, Dorte Thorsen delineates ways in which adolescents in Burkina Faso break away from the parental authorities and dependence through migration. Through earnings from paid labour in towns, these rural adolescents increase their social status and gain maturity that allows them to “assert identities” as adults and “show responsibility towards their family” (Thorsen 2006: 88).

The depiction of lived experiences of young people in Africa above is quite illuminating, but can also be limiting. It is illuminating in the sense that it shows the different aspirations that young people have and how they creatively go about trying to realize them. However, it is also limiting because it confines young people into two blocks, namely, those who wish to quit the social category versus those who wish to stay. Here it

is more likely to obscure young people's practices that entail switching social identities within same social position in different social situations.

In their unsuccessful effort to address such a dualism, De Boeck and Honwana (2005: 4) had argued just a year before that young people in Africa "constantly cross the frontier between childhood and adulthood. As they actively create and recreate their roles in the face of changing conditions, they blur that social divide." The argument squarely addressed the switching between social positions but left out dynamics within a social position, which is why Cole (2010) has raised concerns about this sense of discontinuity. The point here is that young people can still switch between and within social categories without necessarily blurring the social divide. It is all about inter-subjectively fitting into the life of the others (see Jackson 1998, Blumer 1966).

Nevertheless, the explanatory power of this perspective sits in its analytical lenses that zooms into and brings together many dimensions of young people's lives, namely the experiential and phenomenological, the political and sociological (Christiansen et al. 2006). This means that we can see the interplay between agency and social forces. Following Emirbayer and Mische's conception of agency, I argue that to be able to adequately grasp the agentive and creative processes in young people's social (dis)engagement, it is imperative to pay more attention to all dimensions of agency, namely habit, imagination and judgment. Studies that have approached young people through this credible theorization of agency (see for example Fuh 2012, van Reeuwijk 2010) have yielded a nuanced analysis of young people's social actions.

Thus, the question at issue is not whether the lived experiences of young people are characterized by either continuity or discontinuity, but how the two play out in their everyday practices. In fact, this is one of the fundamental questions in the anthropological understanding of social action in relation to social and cultural forces today, a point to which I return later in the conceptual framework.



#### **1.4 Adolescent sexuality as an aspect of the everyday life**

Preoccupations with adolescent sexuality are not new in the circles of Anthropology (see Mead 1928, Malinowski 1929, Schapera 1933). However, anthropological debates on adolescent sexuality have taken different shapes in the past three decades (see, Burbank 1987, Phoenix 1991, Vance 1991, Bucholtz 2002, Johnson-Hanks 2002, Cole 2010, Donnan and Magowan 2010, van Reeuwijk 2010, Lyons and Lyons 2011). In this study I conceptualize sexuality as an aspect of the everyday life beyond essentialist and constructivist conceptions of the same. As such, I am adapting a broad understanding of sexuality not limited to sexual intercourse or sexual identity but encompasses a set of activities, encounters, representations, emotions and sensations which are considered (by the actors ) as constituents of individuals' sexual lives. I am more interested in the social dimensions of sexuality (see Jackson 2007, Lyons and Lyons 2011). Taking a poststructuralist and postmodernist stance, Stevi Jackson remarks that an approach to the study of sexuality that privileges the everyday experiences comes to terms with the manner in which human sexuality is “interwoven within the everyday social fabric of our past and present lives” (2007:4). Embedding sexuality into the social, Jackson (2007:5) credibly argues that “sexual conduct and the sexual self are fully social, embedded in the wider patterns of sociality.”

It is arguable that, until recently, the anthropological research on adolescent sexuality has witnessed the predominance of cultural and structural models for understanding sexuality especially in relation to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Parker 2001, Ramin 2007).<sup>11</sup> Theoretically speaking, we have seen the marriage between cultural and structural determinism whose offspring, among others, is the actor devoid of agency. As such, researchers have difficulties in venturing into the domain of agency and creativity of so-called “most at risk groups”. More precisely, interpretations of sexual practices beyond risk behaviour and vulnerability are not common among anthropologists who rely on cultural and structural models.

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<sup>11</sup> The overall control of the HIV/AIDS research and practice has long been dominated by the biomedical model as championed by epidemiology, public health sciences, demography, psychology, and to some extent sociology and economics (see Price and Hawkins 2002, Baum 1995, Yoder 1997, Parker 2001).

Consequently, agentive and creative acts eminently evident in individuals' sexual practices are often overshadowed in the mentioned research on sexuality. The empirically founded claim I am making here is that, inasmuch as it is important to acknowledge that sexual practices are culturally constructed and structurally influenced, and that they can predispose individuals to HIV/AIDS and other risks, it is equally pertinent to understand the individuals' endowed capacities to actively engage with the cultural and structural constraints.<sup>12</sup> I further expand on this critique in the conceptual framework.

Knaft (2006: 415) rightly cautions that anthropologists' important efforts to contribute to improving and saving lives by extending a foot in the applied realm (citing MacClancy 2002), ought not to compromise "ethnographic scholarship and critical theorization" (see also Yoder 1997). The most important take-home message from Bruce Knaft, especially in the context of medical anthropology, is that as we "negotiate relevance" (Yoder 1997: 131) in relation to the neighbouring disciplines (public health, demography, epidemiology and medicine), it is crucial to be watchful of the pitfalls of "Victorian anthropology and its close twin, missions: to bear witness and lift up unusual others who are judged along western standards to be backward or unfortunate" (Knaft 2006: 416).

This in no way means that medical anthropologists should not deplore "the sickness, suffering and premature death" facing adolescents in relation to sexual and reproductive health. On the contrary, (medical) anthropologists should question how the mentioned health problems are "defined, interpreted, managed, legitimated, or perpetuated" beyond the "simplistic western sensibilities of sympathy, outrage, or intervention" (Knaft 2006: 416). And by extension, it is vital to explore lived experiences of the seemingly "vulnerable" individuals in terms of how they engage with their daily realities (cf. Obrist 2006, Obrist et al. 2010, Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001, Nichter 2008).

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<sup>12</sup> Following Sobo (1999), Taylor (2007:967) calls for social scientists doing research on HIV/AIDS to "pay attention to broader non-AIDS-centred anthropological debates about the concept of culture". In the same spirit, I recommend medical anthropologists studying adolescent sexuality to consider reflections of young people's sexual and reproductive practices beyond the physical and psychological realms to expand them to social well-being, a concept that I introduce later in this chapter.

Specifically Nichter (2008) points to the knowledge gap in health research that little is known about how different individuals, both in similar and diverse contexts, think about, and (differently) respond to a certain health problem. By taking the individual social actors' perspectives seriously, I posit, we can start asking questions that point to the domain of agency and creativity in problematic situations as judged by the respective actors. A few examples from adolescent sexual and reproductive health research with a focus on Tanzania might serve to illuminate this point.

Liljeström et al. (1998) attempted an examination of what it means to be a teenage girl in rapidly eroding, resisting and innovating social and cultural contexts. Clearly the study showed that teenage girls have both "traditional" and "modern" aspirations but also that other actors such as parents, community and religious leaders and the state, have their own plans for her. In effect, the study remarked that social change creates a recipe for conflicting sexual mores in Tanzania.

The challenge, however, was to understand how the respective adolescents' as social actors were actively striving to harmonize or cope with the contradictions and ambiguities. Unfortunately, relying heavily on non-ethnographic data, and informed by a less systematic conceptualization of agency, the authors conclude that "conflicting values, leave the youth at a crossroads, bereft and alone" (Liljeström et al. 1998: 40). On the contrary, as I will show in due course, adolescents are actively and creatively crossing the roads (see also van Reeuwijk 2010, Halley 2012). This, however, does not mean that their sexual trajectories are always smooth (cf. Johnson-Hanks 2002).

In their ethnographic study of "sexual culture" in rural northern Tanzania, Wight et al. (2006) found that there are contradicting sexual norms and expectations (cf. Obrist van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997, Liljeström et al. 1998, Rweyemamu 2007), but that adolescents appeared to manage the ambiguities and inconsistencies. Nevertheless, the authors did not explicitly acknowledge the active engagement of adolescents with what they called "sexual culture". Instead, they stressed that social forces such as the economy and schooling shaped the construction of sexual beliefs. Though this is an important

dimension of the realities explored, it conceals the complexities evident in the lived experiences of the respective subject.

Perhaps one reason could be that Daniel Wight and colleagues grounded the analysis of the ethnographic material solely on a social constructionist view, wishing to position the findings in relation to the permissive (Caldwell et al. 1989) and restrictive (Ahlberg 1994, Heald 1995) debate. To justify my claim, I consider another paper (Wamoyi et al. 2010) that draws on the same ethnographic material (from rural northern Tanzania), but this time the analysis pays more attention to the actors' perspectives. In particular, the paper examines young women's motivation to exchange sex for gifts or money, and the ways in which they negotiate transactional sex throughout their relationships.

Interestingly, in the manner of Helle-Valle (2004) and Haram (2001, 2004), Wamoyi et al. (2010) show that through transactional sex, young women actively engage with structural constraints such as poverty, and some of them accumulate business capital. In addition, they creatively negotiate with social factors such as kinship and restrictive norms by capitalizing on individual attributes such as beauty, and take advantage of immediate circumstances to open up spaces for sexual encounters. At this point, Wamoyi et al. (2010) make different recommendations in terms of HIV/AIDS prevention, beyond the increasingly unfashionable tendency to "reify culture" (Taylor 2007: 975).

On his part, Rweyemamu (2007) offers a compelling sociological analysis of how adolescents negotiate conflicting sexual values in Dar es Salaam. The study was geared towards testing a model developed from Anthony Giddens' structuration theory.<sup>13</sup> To that end, Rweyemamu draws heavily on quantitative data collected through questionnaires along with in-depth interviews and FGDs primarily based on a single encounter with the research subjects. The study, among other things, marks a break from the dominant cultural determinist understanding of adolescent sexuality, by stressing the agency inherent in the young people as social agents.

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<sup>13</sup> For detail, see Giddens' famous work *The Constitution of Society* (1984).

Nevertheless, one is often struck by the “one sided conception of agency” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 963) inherent in structuration theory when reading through passages in the work. For instance, while acknowledging the adolescents’ concerns with sexual respectability, the study concludes that “...the social expectations of being a ‘good girl’ and a ‘good boy’ are rejected by both girls and boys” (Rweyemamu 2007: 355). This is partly because of the tendency of structuration theory to overemphasize routinized actions in every social practice.

Also in the context of Rweyemamu’s study, the reliance on discursive practices alone (mainly about the ideals) and paying little attention to the lived experiences is a further caveat. In addition, the study reduces agency to “rationalization of behavior” or what the author calls “rational arguments against norms” (Rweyemamu 2007: 355). Against such a reductionist view of social action, I argue that young people inter-subjectively engage with sexual proscriptions. I expand on this point in my conceptual framework and, later on, empirically defend it by showing how adolescents’ and parents’ sexual subjectivity diverge and converge in everyday life situations.

Another interesting attempt to illuminate agency in the sexual lives of adolescents comes from Halley (2012). The latter is a recent ethnographic enquiry into the dynamics of adolescents’ sexuality in the context of changing rural Mtwara in Southern Tanzania. It focuses on the adolescent initiation rituals of *unyago* (for girls) and *jando* (for boys), and how these compete with other agents/actors in terms of adolescent sexual socialization. Specifically, the study examines how individual adolescents in rural Mtwara negotiate their own sexuality in the context of multiple and often contradicting forces.

Situating her study in psychological anthropology and the anthropology of globalization, Halley (2012) contends that female adolescents, who are increasingly enrolled in schools, creatively navigate sexuality along with education in the context of change. Grounding the analysis in lived experiences, the study manages to describe the agentic acts through which cultural values and structural (material) constraints are navigated by the adolescents in the question. However, due to the limits of her theorization, Halley

predominantly addresses two dimensions of agency namely habits and judgement (to some extent) but give limited weight to an equally important element namely imagination. On the contrary, the current study draws on a sound theorization that addresses the agency of young people in its entirety (see Emirbayer and Mische 1998) in different situations of their sexual practices in urban contexts of Mtwara Town.

Lastly, I wish to refer to the groundbreaking contribution in the anthropology of young people's sexuality in the context of AIDS, *Children, Sex and HIV/AIDS in Tanzania* (2010) by Miranda van Reeuwijk. Inspired by a nuanced understanding of agency from Hitlin and Elder (2007) and Emirbayer and Mische (1998), the study illuminates the importance of studying children as "agents in their own right". Here, children's sexual actions are seen as temporal orientations. As such, the study sheds much needed light in terms of how risks as defined by experts, such as pregnancy and disease, are transformed in the context of situated sexual encounters. For that matter, the study innovatively unearths agentive manifestations in the sexual lives of the children in the form of secrecy; impression management and having multiple partners (see van Reeuwijk 2010). As reiterated earlier, just like Miranda van Reeuwijk, I approach adolescents as agents and their sexual practices as social actions or temporal orientations. In extension however, I critically reflect on adolescents' notions of sexual health and risks beyond HIV/AIDS.

Judging from the above examples it seems that, over the last two decades, one of the disturbing questions in the field has been on whether or not the cultural and structural factors suffice to adequately explain the complexities and dynamics in the sexual lives. Especially with regard to young people's sexuality, this pertinent question has been invoked by multiple triggers, such as: ongoing rapid social transformation<sup>14</sup> on the continent, leading to multiple and often contradictory sexual discourses (Cole 2010, Wight et al. 2006, Halley 2012); tension between ideals and realities (Johnson-Hanks 2006, Haram 2004, van Reeuwijk 2010); and, consistently, poor performances of sexual

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<sup>14</sup> On social transformation and how young people forge ways to make ends meet in postcolonial Africa, see the edited volume by Honwana and De Boeck (2005) *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*. For a general overview of how different individuals and social groups grapple with uncertainty in contemporary African Lives, see Haram and Yamba (2009).

and reproductive health “risks” prevention programmes even where culturally sensitive and structurally responsive approaches have been used (Lockhart 2002, Dilger 2003, Bujra 2000). Equally important for the cause have been the shifting trends in current anthropological theory, from grand narratives to mid-range theorization (Knauft 2006, see also Moore 1994).

Both the anthropology of adolescence/youth and the anthropology of sexuality have witnessed significant and perhaps promising shifts in perspectives. On one hand, studies of young people in relation to social change are increasingly leaning towards overcoming the discontinuity-continuity dualism by emphasizing the complexity of young people’s lived experiences. On the other hand, critical analysis of adolescent sexuality beyond the biomedical models as well as cultural and structural determinism is gaining momentum in the anthropology of sexual and reproductive health. The aforesaid trends are not exceptional to the mentioned sub fields of anthropological research, instead they are reflective of the shifting theoretical tendencies in Anthropology (see also Ortner 1984, Knauft 2006, Moore 1994).

Apparently, and especially in African contexts, different aspects of adolescent sexual lives provide unique opportunities to critically inquire into the “reciprocal nature of person and society”, to use the words of Hitlin and Elder 2007: 170).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, an emerging anthropological research genre focusing on sexual and reproductive health issues should seek to extend the analytical horizon in order to grasp the nuances of the lived sexual experiences. In order to further elucidate the nuances of sexuality as a social practice, I first need to say more about the conception of inter-subjectivity and social well-being. The two concepts are central to the ethnographic understanding of adolescent sexual practices that the present study intends to contribute.

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<sup>15</sup> For different forms of agency in Africa, see de Bruijn et al. (2007), and for a recent and sophisticated theorization of agency but in the context of governance processes in Africa, see Förster and Koechlin (2011).

## 1.5 Sexual Intersubjectivity

Gammeltoft (2002:485) so convincingly argues that “as human experience, sexual experience is also always intersubjective and social, created out of shared cultural meanings and social significances.” This implies that “rather than being merely a question of physiological instincts or drives, sexuality is meaning-oriented and intentional, reaching out towards the world and others in it” (Gammeltoft 2002: 485-86). What then is intersubjectivity? And how does it play out in social life? These are among the questions to be addressed in the present section.

Intersubjectivity is one of the core constituents of human agency (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, Jackson 1998). The conceptualization of intersubjectivity in this study is inspired by the pragmatism of George Herbert Mead and the existential anthropological thoughts of Michael Jackson.<sup>16</sup> For Mead, intersubjectivity is vital in social life without which meaningful social inter-action is almost impossible (I expand further on this view in chapter two). Taking into account the plurality or multiplicity of the conditions of human action or what van Binsbergen (2007) has referred to as multiple belonging, Jackson (1998) provides that intersubjectivity entails the interchangeability of standpoints. This is to say, in the flow of social life in particular social, cultural and temporal contexts of their actions, actors simultaneously hold onto their own viewpoints and that of the others.

The above simply means that actors are at once subjects for themselves and objects for others. In this sense, individuals not only make every effort “towards belonging to a world of others” but also “strive to experience themselves as world makers” (Jackson 1998:8). From the vantage point of the existentialists, Jackson (1998:16) argues that the aforementioned struggles for a “balance between being-for-one-self and being-for-others” is one of the fundamental conditions of “social existence.” Michael Jackson (1998) further observes that the balance is a matter of control and it is the quest for the

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<sup>16</sup> According to Michael Jackson (1998) the concept of intersubjectivity is associated with the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, pragmatism of William James, John Dewey and George Habert Mead, and the existential phenomological thought.



latter that constitute the driving force of intersubjectivity. Beyond the functionalist notions of balance, Jackson (1998:19) remarks,

(...) balance do not refer to static equilibrium, harmony or homoestasis but ongoing dialectic in which persons vie and strategize in order to avoid nullification as well as achieve some sense of governing their own fate(...). Existentially, equilibrium is a matter of striking a balance between the countervailing needs of self and other.

In view of the above, to comprehend adolescents' sexual intersubjectivity requires an understanding of what sexuality means for the personal and interpersonal lives of the adolescents. In that respect, I address the manner in which young people engage with their own personal aspirations along with multiple and competing sexual norms and expectations (see chapter five through to eight). This approach is critical in embedding adolescent sexuality into the social while at the same time acknowledging the agency of the actors in question.

## **1.6 Social well-being**

In this section I reflect on notions of social well-being or what anthropologists in the twentieth century referred to as “cultural health”, “cultural synergy”, or/and “pursuit of social sanity and prosperity” (Colby 1987: 879-888). This was building on works in medical anthropology, cross-cultural anthropology, and psychological anthropology. Colby 1987 attempted to advance an anthropological theory of well-being based on the conviction that the need for such a theory dates far back to Benedict, Sapir, and other early anthropologists. This required what he called “the broadening of the frontiers of knowledge” but for some reasons did not attract much attention of scholars until recently.

There has been an increasing interests in what anthropologists are referring to as social health and social death (See Levin and Browner 2005; Steuer 2012). My interests in such notions emanates from two main fronts. First is the increasing concern for critical reflections on notions of health beyond the pathology discourses in medical anthropological studies (see Douglas 1992, 2003, Kaufert and O'Neil 1993, Obrist et al. 2003, Obrist 2004, 2006). For instance, in her study of health, vulnerability and resilience in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Obrist (2006:29) underlines that “people's notions and practices relating to “health” and “risks” are produced and reproduced in social

interaction”(emphasis in the original). The second motive is empirically grounded in the sexual lives of most young people in Mtwara Town. As I delineate in chapters five through to eight, the young people are more concerned with aspects that belong to the inter-subjective domain of social life which is critical for their sense of social well-being.

The above, sharply contrast with the mainstream experts’ framing of adolescent sexual and reproductive “health risks”. For instance, by enacting sexual partnership(s), an adolescent may be attending to his or her emotional or physical desires and curiosity to experiment in sex, while simultaneously gaining the opportunity for peer recognition, status, and material benefits among others. In a situation where pre-marital adolescent sexuality is restricted, the respective young person strives to strike a balance in order to defend his or her sense of social well-being. How he or she goes about satisfying such multiple social expectations along with his or her own aspirations is the subject addressed in rich empirical detail in the ethnographic core of the present study.

However, it suffices at this juncture to comprehend (from the actor’s perspective) the constitutive elements associated with social well-being, why do they matter and how actors in question strive to attain the required attributes for social well-being. In its broad sociological and anthropological sense, as recently reflected by a sociologist Veenhoven (2008), (social) well-being entails a positive state of being, attained through the synchronized satisfaction of personal, relational and collective aspirations. To ground social well-being in everyday practice, I follow Mathews and Izquierdo’s (2009) credible anthropological view – of (social) well-being –as a lived experience embedded in multiple social worlds.

Cross-cultural anthropological analysis of certain aspects of social life that strongly touches on the relationship between the self and the other are quite telling in terms of what constitute core elements of social well-being for individuals and groups across and within cultures and societies. For instance, Benedict (1946) described Japanese culture as a “shame culture” and US culture as a “guilt culture” (Wong and Tsai 2007:209). According to Wong and Tsai (2007: 209), the core constituents of shame and guilt are

“feelings associated with being negatively evaluated either by the self or others because one has failed to meet standards and norms regarding what is good, right, appropriate and desirable.” In the same vein, it has been suggested that social order in most East African societies is conceived to be grounded in respect (Heald 1995). The latter entails articulations of “difference, attention to proper decorum and, above all, self-restraint” (Heald 1995: 493). In this sense, a good person is considered to be “one who has respect.” Accordingly, Heald (1995:493) credibly argues that there is a “respect culture” in many communities in East Africa.

Perhaps the most recent insight comes from anthropological studies on the dynamics of HIV/AIDS disclosure. Worth mentioning here is Noemi Steuer (2012) who sketches a brilliant ethnographic analysis on how people living with HIV strive for honour and respect in the processes of disclosure in Bamako, Mali. Grounding her analysis in Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital, she illuminates how the actors she studied strive for a good name through “everyday conformity” (Steuer 2012:272). To that effect she remarks,

(...) a good name refers to an individual’s sociability (...) the ability to maintain harmonious relationships with others and to lead a life in accordance with religious rules. This includes moral integrity as well as financial independence. Only those who fulfil these normative expectations can reap social benefits and social trust (...) damaged name equals social death... (Steuer 2012: 273).

Thus, Steuer (2012) concludes that rather than being concerned with AIDS itself, people may place more significance in remaining socially accepted in contexts where the disclosure of their HIV positive status translates to stigma (see also Moyer 2012 for a similar approach to understanding how people living with HIV handle stigma in Zanzibar, Tanzania). In this strand of research, honour and respect constitute critical elements for the actors’ sense of social well-being. Indeed, this stance leads towards the understanding of health beyond the parameters of diseases to addressing notions of social health and social risks as well as how they are actively dealt with by actors.

## 1.7 Overview of chapters

In chapter two I outline the theoretical backdrop for the present study which is grounded in a refined theorization of agency and creativity. Inspired by *the cordal triad of agency* proposed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), I extensively illuminate how adolescent sexuality can be approached as a set of social actions, and individual adolescents as agents in themselves.

Chapter three concentrates on the methodological issues pertinent to the understanding of social action from the actor's standpoint. Here I provide a reflective account of the fieldwork processes and methods that were central to the generation and interpretation of the data for the present study. For the sake of situated epistemological reflections, the latter is preceded by a brief sketch of methodological trends in anthropology and in the field of sexual and reproductive health.

In chapter four I provide a description of the study site, drawing on historical, archaeological, sociological and anthropological studies along with my fieldwork data. Against the "isolation" thesis about Mtwara, it is argued that the contemporary social and cultural transformations in Mtwara Town and the region in general, are quite telling as regards national and global dynamics. I also illuminate the extent to which people of Mtwara have often appropriated different encounters from trade, Islam, and Christianity to developmentalist projects and global consumerism and discourses.

Chapter five centres on the question of sexual inter-subjectivity and social well-being among adolescents. Here the aim is to situate adolescent sexual practices in their relational contexts. Thus, the main argument is that, regardless of the form of their sexual relationships, adolescents engage with multiple social expectations, along with their own varied aspirations. A detailed account of different forms of social respectability related to adolescent sexual and reproductive practices in Mtwara Town is provided along with an examination of the parental and peer expectations. Drawing on empirical details, I portray the shared or joint actions that result from the actors' awareness of their subjective

positions and how they strive to fit into the lives of others as a pre-requisite for social well-being.

In chapter six I explore forms of adolescent sexual partnerships. The aim is to make a nuanced contextualization of adolescents' lived sexual and reproductive experiences. For the sake of capturing diversity in lived experiences, a flexible and fluid (not rigid) typology of adolescent sexual relationship formations is proposed. To illuminate the manner in which inter-subjective engagements play out in different social and cultural contexts of social action, I bring together sexual partnerships and living arrangements.

Chapter seven provides the analysis of what it “takes” and “means” for an individual adolescent to establish and sustain a sexual partnership. Contrary to the dominant and perhaps traditional views on adolescent sexuality, the main argument here is that adolescent sexual activities are enacted for different purposes rather than simply performed as mere behaviours compelled by some physical, mental urge or/and social routines. Apart from exploring major processes and ways through which sexual partnerships are established and sustained, I also examine the multiple, overlapping and often shifting attractions and expectations that adolescents project towards their (potential) sexual partner(s). Further to that is the analysis of how adolescents try to commit their partners to actively participate in the respective sexual partnership.

Chapter eight addresses the question how an adolescent creates space(s) for enacting the “forbidden” sexual practice without necessarily upsetting the seemingly hegemonic structures. The central argument is that social spaces for adolescents' sexual practices are enmeshed or interwoven in socially and culturally pre-established practices. I thus examine how the latter are transformed into spaces for sexual encounters by the respective adolescents.

Chapter nine constitutes the conclusion in which I highlight key contributions of this study not only to the anthropology of adolescence, but also to medical anthropological perspectives on sexual and reproductive health. Overall, the present study sheds much

needed light on the efforts towards a nuanced understanding of adolescent sexual practices from the actors' standpoints. Such a knowledge base is not only important for critical analysis of young people's social actions beyond normative cultural and structural determinism but also a cornerstone for adequate intervention programmes.

## 2. AGENCY AND CREATIVITY IN ADOLESCENTS' SEXUAL PRACTICES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Despite shifting trends in anthropology, Knaft (2006: 412) asserts that "... theoretical work has become more integral and intrinsic in anthropological analysis."<sup>17</sup> Perhaps one of the disturbing questions today is how best to understand social actions of our research subjects after a long history of reducing them to mere cultural constructs. By setting out to unearth agentic and creative processes in the sexual and reproductive lives of adolescents, I situate the current study in the academic tradition that scrutinizes the foundation or "essence of social life" (Sewell 1992: 2). An understanding of adolescents' lived experiences from a sound actor-oriented perspective is much more needed today than at anytime before (cf. Bucholtz 2002), especially in the African contexts (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005, Christiansen et al. 2006, de Bruijn 2007, Jeanes and Kay 2013)<sup>18</sup>. This is in response to the dominant and often limiting representations of young people-children/adolescents/youth in the mainstream research and discourses. In such an academic atmosphere, the question of agency looms large.

### 2.1 On agency

Whereas it is widely acknowledged that agency is one of the central concepts in the canons of (post)modern social theory, its theorization has been rife with controversy (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, Ahearn 2001, Hitlin and Elder 2007, Förster and Koechlin 2011). The most notable and notorious tension lies in the famous action/agency-structure dualism. In fact, there have been enormous attempts to close the disturbing conceptual gap especially since the second half of the twentieth century. In sociology for instance, rich examples come from the works of Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984), Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990, 1998), Dawe (1979), Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Hitlin and Elder (2007), to mention but a few. In anthropology, remarkable treatise of agency (not necessarily

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<sup>17</sup> For credible accounts of current theoretical trends in Anthropology, see Bruce M. Knaft's seminal article *Anthropology in the middle* (2006). See also Ortner (1984, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Published almost two decades ago, Sally F. Moore's (1994) *Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a changing scene*, provides some critical reflections on the dynamics inherent in the anthropological project on Africa.

using the term) can be discerned from Turner (1974), BurrIDGE (1979), Leach (1977), Ortner (1984, 2006), de Bruijn et al. (2007), Rapport and Overing (2007), and van Binsbergen (2007), among others.

Disenchanted by the limited success in addressing what seems to be the fundamental theoretical problem in the disciplines concerned, some scholars have questioned the utility of the concept of agency (Smart 1982, Collin 2004). Others have even declared that it does not exist (see Fuchs 2001). As a corollary, its sister concepts, that is, structure (see Sewell 1992) and culture (see Sewell 1999, Ferguson and Gupta 1997) have not been immune to the heated debates in the social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology. Increasingly, particularly in the latter, serious attention is paid on the mismatch between cultural ideals and actors' lived experience. In effect, rich ethnographic accounts of people's lives are acknowledging individual agency, which is why the break with restrictive notions of 'culture' is gaining acclaim in anthropology (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997, de Bruijn 2007). But cultural and structural determinism is still a reality in most anthropological fields as I have underlined earlier in the youth and AIDS research.

Given the breadth and depth of the agency-structure debate, it is beyond the scope of the present section to provide exhaustive historical accounts of that debate. However, several scholars have attempted to delineate the scope of the debate (see for example, Emirbayer and Mische 1998, Rubinstein 2001, Ahearn 2001, Callinicos 2004, Hitlin and Elder 2007, cf. Joas 1996). What is clear in the discussions is the fact that the conception of agency has been contested and shifting.

Nevertheless, a closer examination of the literature portrays at least three trends. First, is the struggle to position agency in the action-structure dualism, and attempts to establish as to where exactly agency is centred. This is dominated by arguments for and against the reductionist Western conception of the actor, heavily focusing on individual freedom or free will. Tracing this dilemma, Emirbayer and Mische (1998:1964-6) dig into its deep roots from the Enlightenment debate "over whether instrumental rationality or moral and



norm-based action is the truest expression of human freedom.” This is evident in John Locke’s conception of the “social contract” which germinated a conception of agency in the sense of human beings’ capacity to master their (lived) circumstances.

Then, came the “individualist and calculative conception of action” advocated by social thinkers like Adam Smith and John Stuart Mills. This was further advanced by thinkers of the time like Jean-Jacques Rousseau who, among other things, stressed both “transcendental imagination and instrumental reason”. The latter were then picked up in Kantian critical philosophy which produced a dualism of reality embedded in “two opposing orders: the conditional and the normative, necessity and freedom.” These were taken up in the classical sociological thinking, the major question being whether or not an individual has agency.

Very briefly, some passages from Rapport and Overing (2007: 3) serve to sum up this genre of the agency debate among classical sociologists:

...Weber suggested that acts be distinguished from mere (animal) behavior on the basis of acts being seen to entail a number of features of human rationality: consciousness, reflection, intention, purpose and meaning (...). He thought that social science should be an interpretive study of meaning of human action and choices behind them (...). On a Durkheimian view, however, what was crucial for appreciation of human action was the conditions under which, and means by which, it took place; also the norms in terms of which choices between acts were guided. (...) To what extent that ‘agency’ existed (...) was a quality of which derived from, and resided in, certain collective representations: in the social fact of a *conscience collective* (...), (emphasis in the original).

Pointing to the influence of the above conflicting views in the social theorization of agency, Rapport and Overing (2007:3) remark:

Much of the literature on agency since the time of Weber and Durkheim has sought to resolve their opposition and explore the limits on individual capacities to act independently of structural constraints. Despite attempts to compromise, moreover, the division does not prove an easy one to overcome.

Perhaps a notable example is Talcott Parsons’ attempt to put up a theory of voluntary action. “In *The Structure of Social Action*” Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 965) assert, “...Parsons argued that conditions may be conceived at one pole, ends and normative rule at another, means and *efforts* as the connecting between them”

(emphasis in the original). So in this context, *effort* would mean agency. However, Parsons' determination towards analyzing "the temporal dimension of action" not only remained trapped in the Kantian dualism but also got buried in his later structural-functionalist theory (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 965).<sup>19</sup>

The above brings me to the second part of the debate, which is characterized by the domination of (post)structuralists, mainly Pierre Bourdieu<sup>20</sup> and Anthony Giddens. The two are among the scholars whose works have come to be labelled as theories of practice (see Ortner 1984, Ahearn 2001). For the purpose of this discussion, the debate is subdivided into two blocks. One is what could be referred to as the Bourdiean model (Hitlin and Elder 2007, see also Sewell 1992). Influenced by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu particularly his conception of the *habitus* (temporary durable structures), the view has led to a multiplication of models that attempt to go beyond the action-structure dichotomy.<sup>21</sup>

In a sense, what is at issue is not whether or not individual actions are determined by structures, but how the actions are produced by and reproduce structures. Hence scholars in this tradition focus on how free actions lead to "unconscious" reproduction of social structures (cf. Bourdieu 1977, see also Hitlin and Elder 2007, Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Put differently, the main conceptual task is to seek for an approach that grasps the *continuum* between the individual's unconscious and the conscious world (Rapport and Overing 2007, cf. Bourdieu 1998).

Critics have questioned if at all actors in the Bourdiean model are left with any agency apart from that of reproducing the structures. Pointing to the inconsistencies between social ideals and individuals' lived experiences, Sewell (1992: 15) for example, doubts

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<sup>19</sup> Emirbayer and Mische (1998:966-67) further map the traces of the Parsonian (and Kantian) conceptions of agency in such works as: James Coleman's *Foundation of Social Theory* (1990) and Jaffrey Alexander's *Action and Its Environment* (1988).

<sup>20</sup> Uncomfortable with co-optation into structuralism, Bourdieu in his lecture, delivered at the University of California, San Diego, in March of 1986 (translated by Wacquant) and published in 1987 (the French version), he characterized himself as constructivist structuralism or structuralist constructivism (see Bourdieu 1987).

<sup>21</sup> For erstwhile famous discussions in this direction, see Parsons (1977), Berger and Luckmann (1966).

the assumption that “even the most cunning or improvisational actions undertaken by agents necessarily reproduced the structure.” This is precisely what Rapport and Overing (2007: 5) have commented on, that instead of transcending the agency-structure dualism, the Bourdiean model gets trapped in “communitarian objectivism”. Following Jenkins (1992), Rapport and Overing (2007: 5) underline that Bourdieu’s framing reduces agency to “a seemingly passive power of reacting (habitually) to social-structural prerequisites” and nothing more.

However, it would also be erroneous to assume that the ability of the actors to reproduce pre-established patterns does not amount to agency, because it does. The only problem is what Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 975) discuss in detail as the tendency to “focus upon recurring patterns of action themselves and thus upon structures, rather than upon the precise ways in which social actors relationally engage with those preexisting patterns or schemas.” This echoes what seems to have been an anthropological error of omission by often regarding ideals (culture) as real.<sup>22</sup>

The second (post)structuralist view of agency has generated a modest understanding that the divide between agency and structure is fluid or flexible. Influenced by Giddens’ structuration theory (1979, 1984), most of the theorists in this line underpin the need to consider both freedom and constraints inherent in social life. In the context of the debate, the view implies that it is naive to think of the agency-structure dualism, because individuals and structures are inseparable. Inspired by ethnomethodologists like Garfinkel and interactionists particularly Goffman, Anthony Giddens attempts to bring together social structures and human actions (see Ahearn 2001, cf. Giddens 1979).

However, commentators have questioned the inherent shortcomings of structuration theory, particularly when it comes to the formulation of its constitutive elements, and how some of the latter are hardly consistent with real life. The most notable critique

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<sup>22</sup> For a fair critique of Bourdieu’s conception of agency, see King’s (2000) *Thinking with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu: A Practical Critique of the Habitus*.

comes from Sewell (1992), who reformulates the logic of rules and resources as used by Giddens.

Some anthropological debates pertaining to agency are worthy of consideration here in order to avoid an unfounded impression that theorization of agency has exclusively been sociological. As hinted at earlier, several anthropologists have grappled with the question of individuals' agentive potentials in the face of social and cultural influences. Indeed, the core of ethnographic undertakings, that is, an understanding of the tension between what people say they do versus what they actually do, acknowledges possibilities for human agency. Despite the dominance of cultural determinism in the twentieth century, the period registered extremely rich literature on individuals' agentive and creative potentials as manifested in their actions (see also Sahlins 1981, Ortner 2001, 2006, Hastrup 2007). It has also been suggested that a remarkable contribution comes from the Manchester school as brilliantly condensed by van Binsbergen (2007).

Finally, let me turn to the most prominent and recent theorization of agency that focuses on understanding of the processes, dimensions, forms and levels of agency. The idea is to advance agency as a theoretical tool capable of informing empirically grounded understanding of the complexities of social life, particularly the countless ways in which agency shapes social action in real life. As underlined by Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 962-3) in their groundbreaking article *What is Agency?* the interest in the current discussion has been to advance agency as “an analytical category in its own right – with distinctive theoretical dimensions and temporally variable social manifestations.”

Consistent with, and reinvigorating growing interest in this direction, almost a decade later Hitlin and Edler (2007: 173) in their seminal article *Time, Self and the Concept of Agency* ask what concepts and empirical measures can we employ to explore the process of – and limits on – individuals' agency? Thus, in the same spirit, I set out to explore different agentic dimensions in the sexual and reproductive practices of adolescents. How I conceptualize agency in the context of the present study is the subject to which I now turn.

### ***The cordal triad of agency: the temporal orientations of action***

In an attempt to arrive at a nuanced contextualization of adolescents' diverse and complex sexual and reproductive practices, I adapt the conceptualization of agency from Emirbayer and Mische (1998). Just like the latter, I extensively engage with George Herbert Mead's conception of society, the act, and (social) *joint* action (cf. Blumer 1966). Following Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 962), I conceptualize agency as:

A temporally embedded process of social engagement or *production of joint actions*, informed by the past (in its *iterational* or habitual aspect) but also oriented towards the future (as a *projective* capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and towards the present (as a *practical-evaluative capacity* to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment (emphasis added).

Building on the works of Mead *The Philosophy of the Present* (1932) and *The Philosophy of the Act* (1938), the above conception of agency differs from others in that it introduces the element of temporal orientation beyond the Newtonian sense of time (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Here the notion of time is not limited to "succession of isolated instants" but "a multi-level flow of nested events, radically grounded in the present experience" yet "not bounded" to the latter (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 968). In addition, the human experience of temporality as underpinned by Mead is ingrained in "the *social* character of emergence, that is, in the passage from old to the new, and in the interrelated changes occurring throughout the various situational contexts within which human beings are embedded" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 968).

This view of socially situated temporal orientations allows for approaching actors as situated in multiple temporally evolving relational contexts – which Mead called "sociality" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 969). The fundamental point in this conceptualisation – which is also central to my thesis – is that "at every step (*of social inter-action*), actors are conceived of not as atomized individual, but rather as active respondents (*or a agents*) within *nested* and *overlapping* temporal-relational contexts" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 969. emphasis added). What is also highly important here is that temporal perspectives, or what Mead would call (re)interpretation and (re)definition (see Blumer 1966: 537), are (re)constructed in an *inter-subjective* process. The latter is made possible through the actor's ability to "hold *simultaneously* to one's

own and to another's viewpoint" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 969, see also Jackson 1998, 2009; Gilbert 1989).

In the manner of Mead as underlined by Blumer (1966: 537-8), "inter-subjectivity is an essential constituent of *human association* through which the *participants* fit their own acts to the ongoing acts of one another and guide others in doing so" (emphasis added). Herbert Blumer further notes that inter-subjectivity is "a formative process in its own right." As such, to attribute it to mere psychological or societal factors such as cultural prescriptions, values and norms or structural pressures is to miss the central point that "human *inter-action* is a positive shaping process in its own right" (emphasis added). By this, Blumer, drawing on Mead, means that:

As participants (*in human interaction-in the flow of social life*) take account of each other's ongoing acts, they have to arrest, reorganize, or adjust their own intentions, wishes, feelings, and attitude; similarly, they have to *judge* the fitness of norms, values, and group prescriptions *for the situation* being formed by the acts of others.(...) factors of psychological equipment and social organization are not substitutes for the interpretative processes; they are admissible only in terms of how they are handled in the *inter-subjective* process (1966: 538).

In view of the above, it is beyond doubt that social action entails complex and dynamic processes beyond structural, cultural and psychological influences. The task of social theorization is to attempt a systematic and analytical examination of the inner formation of social action<sup>23</sup>. This is crucial in the effort toward George Homan's call "to bring men (*and women*) back in" (1964:809) or Sewell's most precious project of restoring human agency to social actors (1992: 1). It is equally vital if we are to avoid what anthropologists like Burridge (1979) have lamented "...but then anthropological analysis tend to fix, objectify, generalise and institutionalize its sociocultural object" and reverse, what Rapport and Overing have noted, "individual agency has come to be buried under the vast weight of the collectivity" (Rapport and Overing 2007: 10). It is in this direction that, I follow in the footsteps of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) toward advancing agency as an analytical category in itself. Below, I delineate and discuss the three dimensions of agency according to Emirbayer and Misches (1998).

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Max Weber's conception of social action in his *Economy and Society* (1978).

Grounded in the earlier underlined conceptualization of agency, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 970), define human agency as:

...the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments which entail temporal-relational contexts of action which through the interplay of habit, imagination and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to problems posed by changing historical situations.

Human agency is thus characterized by forms of actions oriented towards three temporal orientations. No action is hundred per cent oriented towards the past, future or the present, rather, certain forms of actions are more oriented towards the past, the future or the present. Put differently, certain actions are more habitual while others demand more imagination or judgment. That is to say, in every social action, there is interplay of the three dimensions of agency though with varied degree of dominance – meaning that one dimension can be more prominent in certain situation compared to others. The intersections can be depicted in a diagram as follows:

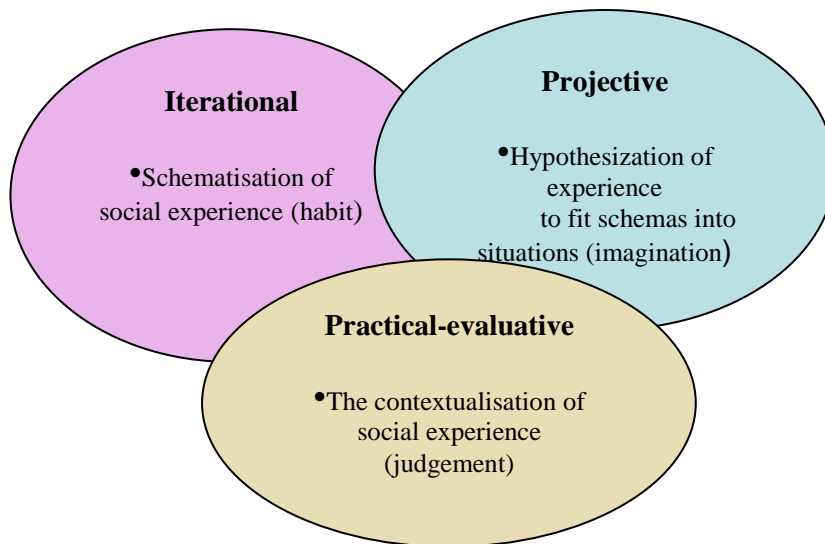


Figure 2.1: A cordal triad of Agency (Emirbayer and Mische (1998))

According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 972-4), to understand the internal structure of each dimension of human agency several points are worthy of consideration. For the sake of highlighting, these include: despite the analytical distinction, in any actual instance of action, the three elements are interconnected; temporal orientation should not be confused

with successive stages but ongoing temporal passage – “temporary embedded in the flow of time” (972); the temporal orientation changes as actors respond to the diverse and shifting contexts of their lives; agentic orientation are not universal, but reflect historical, cultural and personal variability; there exists an interplay between the reproductive and transformative dimension of social action; agency is social and relational and centres around the engagement and disengagement by actors of “structured yet flexible universes” (973); agency is always agency *towards* something.

Furthermore, just like Mead<sup>24</sup> and Joas, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) underline the importance of inter-subjectivity, social interaction and communication in agentic processes. More importantly, they position the capacity for human agency in the structures and processes of human self, which they conceive of as “an internal conversation possessing analytic autonomy versus transpersonal interactions” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998:974).<sup>25</sup> What then constitutes each of the three elements or dimensions of human agency? I address the constitutive parts for each dimension as follows.

### ***The iterational element of human agency***

This is the dimension that has attracted greater interest both in philosophy and social theory, that is, the iterational element of human agency. To quote Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 971), the iterational dimension of agency refers to “*the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universe and helping to sustain identities, interaction, and institutions over time*” (emphasis in the original).

According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 975), the *past* is the most prominent tone in this dimension. The main locus of agency is to be found in the “schematization of social experience” evident in “actors’ ability to *appropriately apply the more or less tacit* and taken-for-granted schemas of action that they have developed through past interactions.”

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<sup>24</sup> On the sociological (anthropological) implications of George Herbert Mead’s thought see Blumer (1966).

<sup>25</sup> Hitlin and Elder (2007) give more space for *the self* in order to analytically dissect what they call level or different forms of agency. For a rich discussion of the dynamics of the self and its link to the social, see George Herbert Mead’s essay on *The Genesis of the Self and Social Control* (1925).



More precisely, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 975) note that “the agentic dimensions lies in *how actors selectively recognize, locate, and implement* such schemes in their ongoing situated transactions.” Several vocabularies have been put in place to explain the iterational dimension of agency but ended up reducing agentic expression into reactive response in form of stimulus and response. Such terms include routine, dispositions, preconceptions, competences, schemas, patterns, typification, and traditions among others (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).<sup>26</sup>

Just to mention some of the empirically traceable iterative moments as outlined by Emirbayer and Mische, these include: *selective attention* (“system of relevances” to use Schütz’s term (1964: 283); recognition of type (again Schütz would call this “typification” through “sameness” or “likeness” (1967); *categorical location* situatedness in other persons, contexts or events with the socially recognized categories of identity and values (presenting different images in different situations); *Manoeuvre among repertoires* (routines are not employed mechanically or situationally determined but selectively drawn from practical repertoires of habitual activity; a degree of manoeuvrability is needed to assure appropriateness. They are intentional as long as they “*allow one to get things done through habitual interactions or negotiation*” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 980, emphasis added).

The last but crucial aspect of the iterative dimension of agency is *expectation maintenance*; this relies on a relatively reliable knowledge of social relationships that actors accrue from the above elements of schematization, which allows them to predict what will happen in the future. The patterns of expectations provide some sort of stability and continuity to the action by introducing the sense of “I can do it again” and “trust” that others will also act in predictable ways (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 981, citing Garfinkel (1963, 1984) and Schütz (1967), see also Blumer 1966, Jackson 1998). This

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<sup>26</sup> Emirbayer and Mische (1998) trace the notion of habit (not devoid of agency) from Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas who associated habit with moral virtue (virtue as a type of *habitus*). Then twentieth century social theorists from Dewey (1922) phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “intentional arc”, Alfred Schutz’s “highly socialized structure” of prereflexive life, to Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) social constructivism. And finally, the theorists of practice – Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* (1977) and Giddens’ structuration (1979, 1984).

explains that maintaining expectations as to how one and others will act in a particular situation is not an automatic and linear process. There are moments when actor's expectations about the future can break down due to disruptions, misunderstandings and changes in systems of relevance, hence need *repair* (Garfinkel) or *re-defining* (Mead).

In empirical research, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue that the iteration orientation as an analytical category has introduced remarkable strands of research into the interplay between agency and its iterational modality. To mention just few include: cultural competence studies focusing on “closeness of fit” (e.g. Swindler 1986, Lamont (1992); creative reproduction – focusing on conflictual and contradictory relationships (e.g. Wills 1977, Garfinkel 1984); and life course development, that is, formative influence of the past experience on agentic processes (see, for example, Berteaux 1981, Elder 1985, Johnson-Hanks 2006).

As noted earlier, most of the contemporary theorization of agency has tended to privilege the iterational dimension and ignore the others. This is also reflected in its share in the empirical research, both in sociology and anthropology, for instance, in the adolescent sexuality studies (see Rweyemamu 2007, Halley 2012) and in the youth studies (see Honwana and De Boeck 2005, Christiansen et al. 2006).

### ***The projective dimension of agency***

According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 984), in order to understand the projective elements of agency in a social action, the “analytic attention” ought to be on “how the agentic processes give shape and direction to *future* possibilities.” This is what makes imagination<sup>27</sup> an important component of human agency. Unfortunately the projective dimension is rarely reflected in serious and analytical manners by many theorists of agency (see also Förster 2013a). It is thus maintained that as they (proactively) respond to the problematic situations or uncertainties in their everyday life, actors are capable of transcending pre-established practices, when needed. This is what Mead calls *distance*

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<sup>27</sup> For a deeper phenomenological approach to the nature of imagination, see Edward Casey's (1971) *Imagination: Imagining and the Image*.

*experience*. The latter allows the actor to anticipate alternative possibilities which can be projected in the future, in the past or in what Förster (2013a) calls “another social or physical space”.

Likewise, Rapport and Overing (2007: 7) write that, “Because they can imagine, human beings are transcendently free; imagination grants individuals *that margin* of freedom outside conformity which gives life its savor and its endless possibilities for advance” (quoting Riesman, 1954: 38). But the question is how can we analytically grasp the internal dynamic of imagination as a social practice beyond assigning it purposive terms like goals, plans and objective, or ephemeral notions like dreams, wishes, desires, anxieties, hopes, fears and aspirations. In a brilliant attempt, Emirbayer and Mische combine the aforementioned terms into what they call *imaginative engagements of the future* – which are then converted into an analytical category – the *projective* dimension of agency.

In their formulation, Emirbayer and Mische underline that projectivity is triggered by the conflicts and challenges of social life, and the agentic force sits in what they call *hypothesization* of experience. This invokes activities that fall into the category of imagination and creativity. To the latter I shall return shortly. Suffice to make my initial point: actors in such situations of “the formation of projects” attempt to *reconfigure* or transform (at least in a temporal sense) the pre-established patterns. A passage from Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 984) helps to further clarify:

Immersed in a temporal flow, they (*actors*) move beyond themselves into the future and construct changing image of where they think they are going, where they want to go, and how they can get there from where they are at present. Such *images* (...) entail proposed interventions at diverse and intersecting levels of social life. (...) *Projectivity* is thus located in a critical *mediating juncture* between the iterational and practical-evaluative aspects of agency (emphasis added).

What then are the constitutive elements of projectivity<sup>28</sup> which ought to be looked at when analyzing this dimension of agency? Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 988-91)

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<sup>28</sup> Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 985-88) carefully examine the notion of projectivity/imagination in philosophical thoughts from Classical and Enlightenment thinkers: Aristotle’s realist epistemology; Kantian philosophy; Utilitarian and Romantic currents to Hegelian and Marxist tradition before landing in sociology. They also scrutinize phenomenological and existentialist perspectives: from Husserl’s (1960)

provide a road map on “how projectivity actually works in social processes.” Projectivity entails both overlapping and highly interconnected processes that feed into one another. Five processes are profoundly critical for projectivity, namely: anticipatory identification, narrative construction, symbolic recomposition, hypothetical resolution, and symbolic experimental enactment. In what follows I briefly highlight the main features of the five processes<sup>29</sup>.

I begin with *anticipatory identification* which points to the important fact that horizons of alternative possibilities are often presented to the actor in a vague and uncertain way. It also means that the actor will have to engage with his or her “stock of knowledge” (in the words of Alfred Schütz) or sedimented knowledge, in a retrospective manner. Social narratives constitute one of the sources of knowledge-which can also be looked at as social imaginaries in the manner of Charles Taylor (2002).<sup>30</sup> Repertoires and typification engrained in the iterative realm form other sources.

Clearly, actors draw on (diverse) past experiences to “clarify motives, goals and intentions, to locate possible future constraints, and to identify morally (or) and practically (or both) appropriate course of action” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 989). Above all, because of the multiplicity and dynamics of human motivations (aspirations) and social relationships, this process of imagining is ongoing and subject to continual re-defining/interpretation by the actor in question (see also Blumer 1966, Hitlin and Edler 2007, Mische 2009).

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theory of temporal structure of experience, Heidegger’s (1962) vision of the *forestructure* of action – actors as *caring* about their future, then Jean-Paul Satre’s (1956) conception of the emotional engagement of the future, and Schütz (1967) treatise of *the project* as a core unit of action, and the notion of fluid and shifting fields of possibilities. Finally, the Pragmatist views on the imaginative flexibility of actors: from Dewey’s (1981) analysis of experimental relationship with the future as a basic dimension of human action, then Mead’s (1934) conception of the imaginative capacity of the “I” to shift between multiple situationally variable “me” as core to sociality, or what we may call participation in the lives of others through what Mead calls “joint action” (see also Blumer 1966: 540, Gilbert 1989).

<sup>29</sup> For recent comprehensive reflections on projectivity, see Ann Mische’s (2009) *Projects and Possibilities: Researching Futures in Action*.

<sup>30</sup> For critical reflections on social imaginaries see Charles Taylor’s seminal article *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2002). See also Taylor (2004).

*Narrative construction* is another process within projectivity. Two points are important to note here: one is that construction of narratives simply provides the actor with a vehicle to imagine or locate future possibilities. But narratives are not projects in themselves. Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 989) categorically state that “narratives represent a particular *cultural structure* that may exist independently of *intentionality*” but “they (narratives) do provide cultural resources by which actors can develop a sense of movement forward in time.”

Like social imaginaries, narratives “help actors to visualize proposed resolutions to *lived* conflicts” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 989). The second point hints at the social and cultural belonging(s) of the actors, which is defined in the prevailing narratives. The “specificity” and importance of the narratives, along with the “careers” or *histories* (see Blumer 1966: 541) that they present to the actor, are more likely to trigger corresponding gravity and complexity of imagined futures. A cautionary note here is that narratives are never rigid, but flexible, and, by extension, subject to agentic manipulation by actors (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, see also Mead 1925, de Certeau 1984). This point becomes clearer in the next dimension of projectivity.

The third qualitative component of projectivity is *symbolic recomposition*. Again, this has a lot to do with creativity which takes the form of (temporal) re-configuration and transformation. It is basically about creation of spaces for intentional actions that I explore in empirical details in chapter eight of this study. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 989-90), the projective imagination operates in similar ways like “the capacity of metaphor to create semantic innovation by taking elements of meaning apart in order to bring them back in new combination.” Here, symbolic recomposition entail countless ways in which “actors *playfully* insert themselves” into a variety of possible courses of action and snatch alternative opportunities, which in turn expand their (actors’) flexible response to a given field of action. This precisely pays homage to de Certeau’s (1984) conception of “tactic” and its inherent capacity to impose itself in spaces of others. In short, what is more eminent in this process is “an inter-subjective transactional dimension” of social action (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

*Hypothetical (or imaginary) resolution* is the fourth dimension of projectivity, which entails the task (for the actor) of identifying potentially appropriate resolutions for the multiple and often contradicting concerns. The latter include but not limited to moral, cultural, economic, practical and emotional demands – all of which are critical to what I call *social well-being*. In its broad sociological and anthropological sense, as critically reflected by the sociologist Veenhoven (2008), (social) well-being entails a positive state of being, attained through the synchronized satisfaction of personal, relational and collective aspirations. To ground social well-being in everyday practice, I follow Mathews and Izquierdo's (2009) credible anthropological view – of (social) well-being – as a lived experience embedded in multiple social worlds. Indicative here, is that, as they propose *hypothetical resolution* on the bases of possible scenarios, actors “will often attempt to resolve several conflicts simultaneously and to incorporate different fields of intended action” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 990).

An example from adolescents' sexual projects is required to illustrate the above point. By enacting sexual partnership(s), an adolescent may be attending to his or her emotional or physical desires and curiosity to experiment in sex, while simultaneously gaining the opportunity for peer recognition, status, and material benefits among others. In a situation where pre-marital adolescent sexuality is restricted, the actor not only constructs a counter narrative, but also engages in symbolic decomposition and experimental enactment. These allow the actor to either create or seize (or both) space for sexual encounters. These dynamics are addressed in rich empirical detail in chapters five through to eight of the present study.

The final dimension of projectivity is *experimental enactment*. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 990-91), experimental enactment sits at the margin, or “borderline between imagination and action”, which also means “between the future and the present”. Building on the previous processes of projectivity, it is clear that “once scenarios have been examined and solutions proposed, these hypothetical resolutions may be put to test (by the actors) in tentative or exploratory social interactions.” Especially with regard to

adolescents, psychologists such as a well-known advocate of the life-cycle model, Erik Erikson, consider this “as role experimentations” – by means of which individual adolescents *try out* possible identities. However, as pinpointed earlier on in the introductory chapter, it has been potently argued by Bucholtz (2002) that, “Identity is agentive, flexible and ever changing.”

### ***The practical-evaluative dimension of agency***

This dimension of agency focuses on the situatedness of social action (Joas 1996). For Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 994), the *practical-evaluative* is about how actors respond to the “demands and contingencies of the present”, such that even the seemingly habitual or taken-for-granted ought to be “adjusted to the exigencies of the changing situations, and newly imagined projects must be brought down to earth within real-world circumstances.” At this point, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 994) posit:

...judgments and choices must often be made in the face of considerable ambiguity, uncertainty, and conflict; means and ends sometimes contradict each other, and unintended consequences require changes in strategy and direction. (...) The problematization of experience in response to emergent situations thus calls for increasingly reflective and interpretive work on the part of social actors.

Michael Jackson (2009: 240) echoes the above understanding of judgment by situating where it is shielded; specifically he remarks:

Located in our *intersubjective* encounters, judging cannot, therefore, claim any final resolution of the quandaries of life. This means that judgment is not a matter of some *unreflective*, a priori, moralistic condemnation of difference on the egocentric or ethnocentric grounds (...). On the contrary, judgment is a way of doing justice to the *multiplex* and *ambiguous* character of human reality by regarding others (...) as ourselves in other circumstances.... (emphasis added).

The emphasis, in both of the two quotes above, is that judgment, as a social practice, is situated. In social and philosophical thought, efforts have been made to grasp this crucial dimension of (social) action. Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 994) provide an inventory of the terms that have been used to describe situationally based judgment in the literature: practical wisdom, prudence, art, tact, discretion, application, improvisation and intelligence.<sup>31</sup> The explanatory power of the mentioned notions is limited to the

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<sup>31</sup> Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998: 994-7) survey of literature shows that practical evaluation has received less attention in modern social thought than in the medieval era. They underline the Aristotelian views of

description of some aspects of agency but do not allow for comprehensive analysis. Because of that, Emirbayer and Mische designate it as the *practical-evaluative* dimension of agency.

In this dimension of agency, the primary locus of agency sits in “the contextualization of social experiences”. Following the pragmatists’ emphasis on inter-subjectivity, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 994) consider that inter-subjective encounters distinguish what is termed here a “strong” situational moment of deliberative decision making, as opposed to the “weak” situatedness or tacit manoeuvre, which belongs to the iterative dimension. To be able to dig into the internal dynamics of practical evaluation, attention ought to be paid to five processes, three of them (problematization, decision and execution) being more dominant than the others (characterization and deliberation). In what follows I briefly highlight these elements.

First, *problematization* is the analytical component that focuses on what draws the attention of, and presents to, the actors the ambiguity and uncertainty<sup>32</sup> inherent in a specific concrete situation. This triggers what Sewell (1992) has called the critical challenge of “analogical transportation”<sup>33</sup>, which calls for some practical judgment on the part of the actor (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 998).

Second, *characterization* is the component of practical evaluation that invokes the past in the present. At this point, (social) actors are forced into some kind of reflective engagement with concrete situations. Among others things, the actor may reflect on whether or not the circumstance demands simple activation of a particular habitual

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practical wisdom; then theories of judgement and critical deliberation including Kantian ethics, Dewey, Arendt, and Habermas; finally the arrival of Feminist vision of situated reasoning and contextual mode of judgement.

<sup>32</sup> There is an increasing body of anthropological literature on the notion of uncertainty (see Haram and Yamba 2004, 2009; Whyte 1997). As a reflection of the growing interest in the topic, *uncertainty and disquiet* was the theme for the 12<sup>th</sup> EASA Biennial Conference held in Paris, from 10-13 July 2012 (and I happened to be a participant). Likewise, almost a decade ago, a three-day conference on *uncertainty in contemporary Africa* was held in Arusha, Tanzania, whose product, among others, included the earlier mentioned publication by Haram and Yamba. The question, however, is to what extent is uncertainty conceptualized in relation to agency?

<sup>33</sup> This is what Dewey (1985: 15) refers to as “incompleteness of situations”, that is something is there but does not constitute the entire objective reality (cf. Bourdieu 1977, Giddens 1984).



activity, or whether it calls for performance of a specific duty, or whether it provides a space in which “the pursuit of a particular project of action is appropriate or even possible” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 998). Following Nussbaum (1986), Emirbayer and Mische note that sometimes characterization may require the actor in question to respond to the nitty-gritty and vagueness of the situations by adapting his or her judgment to the matter at hand. At this moment, “the principles or schemas of action set up in advance have a hard time” in attending to the task at hand. It is also noted that judgments of this type are often *emotional* and *cognitive* (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 998, see also Nussbaum 1986).

*Deliberation* is the third element of *practical evaluation*. Here plausible options should be reflected on in relation to practical awareness and understandings against the broader field of possibilities and aspirations. In a sense it entails projecting into the future. For Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 999), deliberation goes beyond mere “unreflective adjustment of habitual patterns of action to the concrete demands of the present.” In addition, it potentially involves “a conscious searching consideration of how best to respond to situational contingencies” with a view of attaining “broader goals and projects”. It thus injects in the actor some sense of determination to garner means for actualizing “specific habits and projects”. Equally important, regardless of whether the actor is contextualizing one or multiple and contradictory possibilities, deliberation is always about “the search for the proper course of action” to be followed amid uncertain situations. Above all, deliberation, just like characterization, involves emotional engagement with particularities of situations.

The fourth element of practical evaluation is *decision*. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 999), decision is a follow-up on deliberation, in that the latter needs the former in terms of updating the actor on “how to act here and now in a particular way.” The process is not always luminous. In some situations the choices are highly discrete so that the actor can clearly see how he or she “finally arrives at a decision”. In others, a decision *blends* erratically into “the flow of practical activity”, and may not be clearly perceived by the actors in the course of action until later. Either way, decision “points in

the direction of action within the circumstances of the present” and produces “a resolution to translate engagement” with the circumstances in question into “concrete empirical interventions”. Following Dewey’s (1940) notion of flexible “end-in view”, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 999) further note the complexity of decision. They insist that some “decisions are provisional, tenuous, and opportunistic.”<sup>34</sup> Some are invoked to engage with multiple “problematic situation simultaneously”. Others may not allow for “easy formulation and explication”. Thus, beyond the rational-choice understanding of decision-making, the take-home message here is that “choices can be a matter of tacit adjustment or adaptation to changing contingencies-including feedbacks from experience-as well as the product of articulable explicit reasoning.”

Finally we have the *execution* dimension of practical evaluation. Following Aristotle’s conception of executive capacity, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 999) provide that execution entails “a capacity to act rightly and effectively within particular concrete life circumstances.” It is thus not simply grasping what the actor wants to do, that is, decision, but also how “best to set about it” in a certain situation and moment. Just to link execution to the previous elements: to deliberate is to consider making a decision, but to decide is to mark a point of departure towards concrete action.

Thus it is execution that marks the actual doing of the action. Execution is about responding “at the right time, with reference to the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way.” This constitutes “what is appropriate and best”. In the manner of Aristotle, such a capacity is “a characteristic of excellence”. In the context of adolescent sexuality, “excellence” is what it takes to attain (social) well-being. However, the actor is not always perfect in execution. Blumer (1966: 537), following Mead, reminds us:

The fact that the human act is self-directed or built up, means in no sense that the actor necessarily exercise *excellence* in its construction (execution), he may do a very poor job in constructing his act, he may fail to note things of which he should be aware, he may *misinterpret* thing that he notes, he may exercise *poor judgment*, he may be faulty in mapping out *prospective lines of conduct*.... (emphasis added)

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<sup>34</sup> See also Johnson-Hanks (2006) on the notion of *judicious opportunism* for comparison.

Interestingly, Emirbayer and Mische's conceptualization of execution as an analytical category of agency takes care of the above. It shows that excellence or (social) well-being (in the context of the present study) is not stable and rigid, since it can be gained, enhanced, lost and regained. Specifically, it is categorically stated that:

Sometimes even judicious execution, however, entails tragic loss, as when the fulfillment of a duty or realization of a particular vision of a good requires the sacrifice of an equally compelling duty of good (...). Execution, in such cases, marks not a happy resolution but rather the fulfillment of a lesser evil. Moreover, even relatively unproblematic instances of execution often create new problems for action further down the road...(Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 1000)

All in all, execution, or action, signals that the dimension of practical evaluation is complete. The latter is critical in the "contextualization" of the actors' "habits, ends, duties, and projects". Emirbayer and Mische also highlight empirical manifestation of practical evaluation in several studies that I will just mention briefly here: temporal improvisation such as the manipulation of temporal structure of gift exchange (see Bourdieu 1977); resistance, subversion and contention, for example, de Certeau (1984) on the "procedures and ruses/tactics"; also James Scott (1990) on the tactics of resistance; local or prudential actions (see Leifer 1988); and deliberation in public (see Emirbayer 1992).

## **2.2 On creativity**

Before I justify the relevance of the above theorization of agency to the understanding of adolescent sexual practices, let me briefly highlight some key points about creativity<sup>35</sup>, a concept that has prominently surfaced throughout the above discussion. The reason is that it is almost impossible to understand agency without creativity, and the other way round. Joas (1996: 4) affirms that "there is a creative dimension to all human action." But, what then is creativity? As a popular term in our days, creativity is frequently used in the field of business and organizational management to imply novelty or innovation (Hallam and Ingold 2007).<sup>36</sup> Social theorists of action refer to creativity in a more conceptually

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<sup>35</sup> In *The Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*, Rapport and Overing (2007: 7-9) attest that anthropologists have long been preoccupied with the notion of creativity, despite the notorious and persistence of cultural determinism, or what Joas (1996) calls the normative approach to social action.

<sup>36</sup> Joas (1996: 72) traces the notion of creativity in the context of Germany and notes that it first arrived in the German language as *Kreativität* not before the end of Second World War. Since then it has gained popularity in the language of advertising, especially in leisure culture.

reflective way in relation to the nuances of human action, thereby transforming creativity from a mere term into a concept. As a concept, different scholars have dealt with creativity differently. For the sake of brevity, three trends are highlighted.

The first includes those who see creativity as geared towards changing or reshaping the pre-established structural constraints (Leach 1977, Rosaldo et al 1993). The second includes those who believe that creativity is a *cultural imperative* (in the words of Bruner 1993) not against, but reproducing the conventions or pre-established structures (see, for example, Hallam and Ingold 2007, cf. Hastrup 2007).<sup>37</sup> Lastly is the group that combines the first and second views and sees creativity as entailing both reproductive and transformative dimensions of social action (Joas 1996, Förster and Koechlin 2011, see also Förster 2013b).<sup>38</sup>

It is the last understanding of creativity that I follow in this study, precisely because it ties squarely with the foregoing conceptualization of agency. Just like in Förster and Koechlin (2011: 7) creativity is hereby understood as “social action that leads to the change of pre-established habitual, socially or culturally bound intentions and, as societal creativity, to a re-structuring of the situation that actors are facing.” This dimension of social action opens “novel possibilities from the actors’ point of view” and, by extension, “changes social reality”, at least temporarily.

Invoking a temporal and relational dimension of social action, Joas (1996) emphasizes that creativity is always situated, in that it involves improvisational responses of human beings to concrete situation in which they are implicated. The explanatory power of this view on the creativity of action lies in its ability to break with the rational and normative understanding of social action (Colapietro 2009, cf. Emirbayer and Mische 1998, Jackson 1998). Therefore, it can be contended that agency is inherent in social life and creativity

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<sup>37</sup> For a recent anthropological perspective on the creative dimensions of human action, see Hallam and Ingold’s (2007) *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*.

<sup>38</sup> For the most outstanding analysis of the creative character of social action, see Joas’ (1996) *The Creativity of Action*.

is born out of human agency. Förster and Koechlin (2011: 7) clearly state that, “the distinction between agency and creativity is one of act and product”.

***Studying agency and creativity in sexual and reproductive lives of adolescents***

My starting point is how individual adolescents (actors) go about enacting sexual practices (actions) amid multiple, and often conflicting, sexual norms and expectations. Approaching this question from the lense of the *chordal triad of agency* not only allows for breaking with rationalistic and reductionist (biomedical/psychological) accounts of adolescent sexuality, it also challenges the dominant normative cultural and structural determinist views of the same. On more specific levels of analysis, looking at adolescents as agents (in their own right) and their sexual encounters as social actions, merits several explanatory credits. I will just point to two major ones here.

First, it allows for going beyond the sexual ideals, to the nuances of adolescents’ lived experiences. This is an important window toward the understanding of cultural prescriptive and structural constraints as flexible, mutable and manipulable in the face of agentive and creative actions of individuals (adolescents). More importantly, it contributes to the ongoing discussions about the concept dear to anthropology, that is, culture, in that individuals (adolescents) can align their acts in different situations without necessarily sharing common values. This way we can seriously begin to think of *joint actions* or *shared action* based on different and sometimes contradicting values (see Blumer 1966, Gilbert 1989, Jackson 1998).

In concrete terms, cultural processes can receive a different analytical gaze. For instance, sexual socialization of adolescents becomes a vehicle for equipping them (adolescents) with capacity to *inter-subjectively* fit into the expectations of others (parents and peers) rather than the mere internalization of sexual norms and values. Likewise, (sexual) social control becomes more or less a matter of *self-control* rather than a structural hammer to subdue (sexual) deviants (see Blumer 1966).

Secondly, it makes it possible to study adolescent sexuality as an aspect of everyday life that cannot be understood in isolation from other dimensions of life. In this profound sense, sexual activities are examined as social actions in their own right rather than as mere immoral or illicit acts or “risk behaviours”. In effect, adolescents are approached as social actors instead of minors, incomplete beings in transition; “most at risk persons/groups” (MARPS/MARGS) or “vulnerable individuals/groups”. As social actions, sexual acts are examined as meaningful temporal social engagements in order to understand how and why they are enacted by the actors (adolescents) in different situations. Apart from unearthing agentic and creative processes in adolescents’ sexual practices, it also illuminates how adolescents are embedded in multiple and inter-dependent social relationships within and beyond their local settings. Here the action/agency-structure dualism is blurred, while the interplay between human action/agency becomes eminent.

In view of the above, it is prominently apparent that in order to adequately underscore the complexities and dynamics inherent in adolescent sexual and reproductive practices, the latter need to be examined from a perspective that pays attention to intersection between individual adolescents’ agency and the cultural and structural contexts. However, such an approach is not without implication for empirical research. I outline in detail the methodological issues which transpired during my extended fieldwork in Mtwara Town in the next chapter. But for a smooth transition from the theoretical to the methodological issues of studying social action, Herbert Blumer’s comment which he gave about five decades ago remains relevant here, and I quote:

(...) the study of action would have to be made from the position of the actor. Since action is forged by the actor out of what he (*or she*) perceives, interprets, and judges, one would have to see the operating situation as the actor sees it, perceive objects as the actor perceives them, ascertain their meaning in terms of the meaning they have for the actor, and follow the actor’s line of conduct as the actor organizes it, in short, one would have to take the role of the actor and see his (her) world from his (or her) stand point (1966:542).

The above passage sharply hints at the methodological challenges in the social sciences today. With the obsession in what is called objectivity and the quest for generalization, the tendency, especially in the mainstream social science research that informs policy and

intervention, has been to pay limited or no attention to Blumer's call. What this means is that such data on, for instance, sexual and reproductive actions of adolescents have been gathered by "detached observers" who often miss the actor's viewpoint.

However, there is hope in anthropological research, especially through the ongoing critical reflections on the shortcomings of participant observation (see Förster et al. 2011, Spittler 2001<sup>39</sup>, Jackson 1998). Emphasis is increasingly placed on understanding actors' lived experiences beyond the traditional anthropological understanding of "emic" versus "etic" perspectives (Geertz 1973). Specifically, more attention is on participation, beyond interviews and observation (Spittler 2001, Förster et al. 2011); inter-subjective understanding of social actions (Jackson 1998); and sensory experiences (Stoller 1989, 1997, Förster. 2011).

### 2.3 Summary

In this chapter, I have concentrated on the theoretical and conceptual issues central to the question of the agentive dimensions of social action. The motive emanates from the disenchantment with mainstream research on adolescent sexual practice, in which the latter are reduced to rational and normative understandings. Tracing the contemporary theorization of agency and creativity, it has become clear that until recently the action/agency-structure dualism has been dominant in the sociological and anthropological analysis of human action.

The controversy, however, has been on how best to close the disturbing gap in order to appreciate the intersectional linkages between action/agency and structure in social life. It is thus claimed that *the cordal triad of agency* proposed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), drawing heavily from pragmatists, especially George Herbert Mead, offers a swaying argument in the debate. In the adolescent sexuality case, approaching individual adolescents as agents in themselves and their sexual acts as social actions, allows for coming to terms with the complexity and dynamics inherent in the adolescents' sexual

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<sup>39</sup> Gerd Spittler (2001) is only available in German. Due to the language barrier I rely on the discussions of his ideas about *thick participation* during a seminar on participation with Till Förster. Worth mentioning is the presentation by Anna Christen on Spittler's paper along with a rather complementary view from Paul Stoller's (1989) *The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Anthropology*.

activities. Furthermore, the approach carefully brings together agentive, creative, cultural and structural dimensions of adolescent sexual practices. This is indeed the much needed conceptual framework for understanding how adolescents engage in certain sexual acts, and why – questions that are at the heart of the present study. By and large, as I show with empirical detail from chapter six through to chapter nine, it is erroneous to think that adolescent sexual practices are devoid of agentive and creative dimensions.



### **3. BEYOND POSITIVISM: THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE PRACTICES**

“Theory, writing, and ethnography are inseparable practices” (Denzin 2002: 483).

Having outlined and settled critical ontological questions pertaining to our understanding of adolescents’ sexual and reproductive acts – as social actions – it is equally crucial to grapple with epistemological implications of the same (Carter and Little 2007), that is, how can we know about them (actions). The question takes me back to Herbert Blumer’s concern as to how can we study social action from “the position of the actor” (Blumer 1966: 542). Thus the thrust in the present chapter is to offer a reflective account of the fieldwork processes and methods that were central to the generation and interpretation of data for the present study. Fundamentally, the latter is based on ethnographic fieldwork of about fifteen months between 2010 and 2013. However, in order to situate my own reflections, I first highlight the methodological trends in anthropology and in the field of sexual and reproductive health.

#### **3.1 Methodological trends in anthropology: a snapshot**

Ethnography remains to be the linchpin for anthropological knowledge production (Marcus 2002, Knaft 2006) ever since it was explicitly sketched by Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) in the early twentieth century (see Malinowski 1922). However, the confines of what constitutes ethnography have been contested especially since the so-called “crisis of representation” in anthropology during the 1980s (see Marcus 1998, 2002, Marcus and Fischer 1986/1999, Clifford and Marcus 1986, MacCarthy 1992).<sup>40</sup> Whereas the famous participant observation approach to ethnographic fieldwork is still cherished in anthropology (Plummer et al 2004) and beyond (Price and Hawkins 2002), concerns have been raised against its limitations

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<sup>40</sup> For a snapshot on the “crisis of representation” in anthropology see Flaherty, Denzin, Manning and Snow’s (2002) *Review Symposium: Crisis in Representation*.

(Marcus and Fischer 1986/1999, Stoller 1989, Wight and Barnard 1993, Jackson 1998, Spittler 2001, Charmaz 2006, Förster 2011, Förster et al. 2011).<sup>41</sup>

Some scholars challenge its (participant observation) starting point of defining people confined in a place at the expense of multi-sitedness<sup>42</sup>; and its overemphasis of rapport with mere informants, thereby ignoring reflexivity in multi-sited ethnographic space (see Fischer and Marcus 1999, Marcus 2002). Such anthropologists call for a multi-sited ethnography, one that is capable of juxtaposing different lifeworld (Marcus 2002) or what Michael Jackson refers to as intersubjective engagement with the lifeworld<sup>43</sup> of the other, again based on “intersubjective life” (Jackson 1998: 18).<sup>44</sup>

Other anthropologists like Gerd Spittler, Paul Stoller and Till Förster have, among other things, questioned the “lumping” together of participation and observation,<sup>45</sup> because it masks “the fundamental difference between the two” and, in extension, overlooks the differences in the type of data that each is capable of generating (Förster 2011: 7, see also Spittler 2001). Equally, these scholars lay bare the inability of interviews, surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observation when it comes to grasping much of the nuances of the lifeworld of others (see Förster 2011, Spittler, 2001, Stoller 1987, 1997). While acknowledging the importance of interviews and observation in ethnographic fieldwork, these anthropologists contend that participation is central to accessing the

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<sup>41</sup> The competing views between the traditional and emerging models of ethnographic practices create a recipe for what is envisioned as “the crisis of reception”, for detail, see Marcus (2002) *Beyond Malinowski and After Writing Culture: On the Future of Cultural Anthropology and the Predicament of Ethnography*.

<sup>42</sup> The notion of multi-sited ethnography as used by Marcus (2002) does not imply mere physical research sites rather the multiplicity of lifeworld(s) even within the same place, community, society and culture. It alludes to inter-subjectivity, which is the ability to simultaneously hold multiple viewpoints (see Jackson 1998).

<sup>43</sup> As clarified by Till Förster, lifeworld (*lebenswelt*) as a concept is adopted from German Phenomenology, and was introduced in the social sciences by Alfred Schütz. In this context, it refers to “the horizons of all possible, subjectively meaningful social action from the actors’ point of view. (...) it does not mean the view of life or world-view” (Förster 2011: 8).

<sup>44</sup> According to Marcus (2002), and in line with Gupta and Ferguson (1992, 1997), the ongoing waves of social transformations both in the Western and non-Western societies, following the 1980s postmodernity and later globalization, demand for an alternative paradigm of ethnographic practice different from the traditional Malinowskian/Boasian model (see also Hastrup 2013).

<sup>45</sup> Förster (2011: 6) maintains that observation is “an intentional act” and has a focus in terms of what one wants to observe. On the other hand, “seeing” is not focused. For rich reflections on ethnographic fieldwork through “The Emic Evaluation Approach (EEA)”, see Förster (2011: 7-13).

often overlooked dimensions of the actors' standpoint. On how ethnographers should participate in the social practices of the others, it is argued that participation entails sharing sensory and bodily experience with others, or *life lived in common* (Jackson 1998, see also Howes 1991, Spittler 2001, Förster 2011).<sup>46</sup>

In view of the above I should briefly highlight dominant tendencies in researching sexual and reproductive practices for two related reasons: One is to depict the need to go beyond positivism which is inherently dominant in the field. While many anthropologists have recently recovered from such influences (see Ortner 1997), to use the words of Förster (2011: 5), "a little survey research" continues to be part of "the usual breadth of anthropological methods". The second reason points to the use and abuse of ethnography beyond the domain of anthropology. This is also not new to anthropology since the latter's core concepts such as culture have been appropriated by other disciplines, but, by extension, never retain the same anthropological thoroughness (Tylor 2007, Johnson-Hanks 2002). As a result, there are several variants of ethnography and participant observation (in the name of qualitative research). To what extent these tend to do justice to respective concepts and approaches leaves a lot to be desired (Marcus 2002). I will highlight a few examples below.

To start with, the dominance of quantitative "large-scale sample survey" (Price and Hawkins 2002: 1327), whether in demography or in epidemiology, marks "the gold standard" for studying sexual and reproductive practices, often as public health problems (Baum 1995: 459). The so-called scientific legitimacy along with objectivity, verifiability and generalisability of data from survey methods have been the basis for the latter's popularity, if not supremacy (see Price and Hawkins 2002). As pointed out earlier in chapter two, such approaches have repeatedly been questioned for their "reductionist view of the world in which relatively straight forward patterns of causality are established

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<sup>46</sup>Similar ethnographic trends are being echoed in medical anthropology. To mention just one example is Stroeken (2010) *Moral Power: The Magic of Witchcraft*. In this work based on extended fieldwork in Tanzania, Stroeken emphasizes the need to go beyond stories told by interviewees, to observation of the situations, but even more necessary is participation in the practices which tells more than words, myths, proverbs, beliefs and cosmological descriptions.

by means of statistical procedures” (Baum 1995: 459, see also Johnson-Hanks 2007, Lockwood 1995, Warwick 1982).

This, however, in no way means that any statistical analysis is useless because analysis of quantitative data from a properly selected statistical sample can suggest (in a strict sense of suggesting) important trends that shape the contexts (not the actions) of social practices. Nevertheless, such statistical analysis may not necessarily establish “causality” because quantitative data “only represent an empirical pattern at one point in time, whereas ‘causality’ depends upon an analysis or understanding that goes beyond the collection of surface facts and figures” (Price and Hawkins 2002: 1327). In a sense, statistical analysis misses out what goes on in the flow of social life. To use the words of Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 972), the analysis ignores the important fact that instances of (social) actions are “temporary embedded in the flow of time”. This is why, as I outline below, I use statistical data only to indicate and describe some general trends or patterns but not to explain the action of the actors in question.

Particularly with the arrival of HIV/AIDS, there has been a remarkable trend towards qualitative methods in applied health research. Sexual and reproductive health issues have not been exempted in this regard. Baum (1995) has suggested that such a move was triggered by a realization of the diversity and complexity of health issues. In extension, the changes have invoked different and complex research questions in the field of public health. As Baum (1995: 459) aptly puts it, “epidemiological methods (*just like other positivistic approaches*) were not invented to cope with the complexities of this arena” (emphasis added). Despite the reluctance of the host, qualitative methods have landed in the territory of public health and epidemiology. The immediate questions include: what shape(s) do qualitative approaches take and, more importantly, to what extent do methods manage to escape the positivistic influence?

Very briefly, Price and Hawkins (2002: 1327) argue that, unlike survey methods, the epistemological power of qualitative methods seem to lie in the latter’s “potential to explore and probe more deeply into people’s accounts of social life.” They (the authors)

also critically note, however, that “a good deal of qualitative research remains informed by positivism, aimed at collecting objective social facts and eliciting accounts of shared norms and values.” Illustrative here is the use of focus group discussions (FGDs) whereby the latter has recently become a “classic” qualitative method in the field of sexual and reproductive health (Price and Hawkins 2002: 1327, see also Cunningham-Burley et al. 1999).

Whereas FGDs are useful in mapping predominant social ideals, they often end up producing normative responses (Price and Hawkins 2002, see also Parker et al. 1991). Consequently, FGDs can be crippling when it comes to unearthing complexities beyond the virtual realities. Here little is generated on the lived experiences in terms of how, when and why individuals make use of or manipulate or contradict norms to justify actions (Price and Hawkins 2002). As such, the lived everyday reality is obscured at the privilege of idealized normative responses (see Lockwood 1995). Conscious of such limits of FGDs, I used the latter (with parents) towards the end of my fieldwork, after I had generated rich information about the everyday and lived sexual and reproductive practices of the adolescents in question. The idea was to elicit additional information towards understanding the inter-subjective engagement between parents and children. In addition, because I had interacted and participated in the lives of most of the participants, it was possible for me to transcend beyond the normative views by pointing to concrete cases. This in turn transformed the atmosphere of the FGDs, from voicing general opinions to recounting ones own experiences or that of others.

Along with FGDs, other qualitative methods have been developed especially in the framework of development agencies and practitioners’ need to for social and cultural sensitive interventions. These include so-called rapid assessment methods, such as participatory rural or rapid appraisal (PRA) and participatory learning for action (PLA). In both cases, the idea is to escape extended ethnographic fieldwork yet still arrive at the seemingly rich view of the actors (Price and Hawkins 2002). Unsurprisingly, due to their rapidity, they tend to “promote the production of a consensus view and normative discourse from participants” (Price and Hawkins 2002: 1328, see also Mosse 1994).

On their part, some anthropologists in the field of sexual and reproductive health have also been tailoring ethnographic practices to somehow fit the applied requirements of coming up with time-friendly ethnographic approaches. This has led to surrogating ethnography as case study (Eyre 1997), social network analysis (see Wolf 1998) and peer ethnography (Price and Hawkins 2002). Unfortunately many of these initiatives remain trapped in the quagmire of participant observation.

### **3.2 The ethnographic practices**

Throughout the process of data generation I heavily relied on persistent participation, observation and in-depth inter-views (mainly in the form of conversations). For some reasons, delineated below, I also conducted a survey three months after the commencement of my fieldwork. In keeping with the ethnographic rhythms, moving back and forth between data generation and analysis as well as writing has been the main preoccupation throughout this study. The value of this approach lies in the ontological and epistemological linkages as hinted at in the present chapter's opening quote from Norman Denzin (see also Charmaz 2006, Förster 2011). As noted earlier, I carried out fieldwork in Mtwara Town between July 2010 and November 2011. I also made additional research visits in December 2012 and January 2013. On how and why I had to engage in specific ethnographic and non-ethnographic practices, is the subject that I now discuss.

I started the ethnographic endeavor by hanging out in the streets and other urban spaces of Mtwara Town. This seeing went hand in hand with less focused conversations and discussions with several actors in different places. First, the staff in the guest house where I spent my first few weeks. Secondly, in restaurant/bars where I went to look for food and meet friends with whom I had lost touch during the six years after our University graduation. I should also mention the company of a few students of mine who had secured jobs in Mtwara after getting their first degree. Despite this wide network, it took me a month's stay in a guesthouse while looking for a house to rent. This involved moving from one middleman or broker (*dalali*) to the other. The hassles involved in the

search for an apartment was a clear indication of the (emerging) housing problem in Mtwara Town, a fact that implied several questions that I had to ask, not only my friends but also the middlemen (*madalali*) and others. That the rent prices were even higher than in Dar es Salaam was another point to reflect on. I address the issue of housing at length in next chapter.

I finally secured a house in Shangani West, not far from the beach but a little bit outside the town's centre (about four kilometres). By the standards of urban planning in Mtwara Town, Shangani West combines medium and low-density settlement. Indeed, there are both posh and relatively normal houses like the one I lived in. For easy and flexible mobility in town I needed contacts with drivers of *taxis*, *bodaboda/pikipiki* (motorbike) and *bajaji* (trycles). Some of those I hired regularly became friends and research participants. I could simply call one of them whenever I needed transport. Because I had to go out shopping, apart from hanging out, at least one or two encounters with a *bodaboda* or *bajaji* driver per day were inevitable. This way, I participated as a customer (*mteja*) in their daily economic activity. At the same time, especially in casual conversation, I explored other leisure spaces; they would tell me about events in town, how they seduced girls and how they were sometimes seduced by them, how they were sent by men to pick up girls from College hostels and rooms right across town, and how life was getting more expensive in town lately. As I show in chapter seven, several of girls' boyfriends were drivers of motorbikes (*dereva wa bodaboda*).

In fact, one of the male participants I followed up was a *bodaboda/pikipiki* driver who lived in my neighbourhood. I used to hire him most of the time so that we developed a kind of joking relationship. Unlike others who would refer me as "boss" (they considered their customers as bosses), he referred to me as *bro*, meaning brother, and I referred to him as *sharobaro*, meaning youngster (I return to the notion of *sharobaro* in chapter seven). At this point, it really mattered a lot to consciously maintain the way I addressed him as well as the language I used in our interactions in order to sustain a developing inter-subjective engagement. As I depict in portrait 6.3, Sharobaro could count on me in moments when he thought I could be of help. In effect, I was able to enter the life settings

and situations of Sharobaro and unearth dimensions of his sexual practices that could not be reached merely through observations and interviews. Perhaps, this is one of the cases where I managed to attain what Gerd Spittler would call “thick participation”. I will come back to this point later.

Another, equally important moment in the initial phase of my ethnographic fieldwork was the observation of young people in pairs, especially in the evening when it was getting dark. This was rarely observed during the day. Here I developed interest in following up the ways through which adolescents initiated sexual partnerships, where and when they found it appropriate to meet and why. Further insights came from participating in social activities and events such as clubbing, drinking at restaurants and bars, relaxing at the beach at the weekends, shopping at the market, partying with friends as well taking part in friends’ occasional functions. Among other things, the moments were helpful in mapping and exploring social actors and social spaces in town (the first three months of my fieldwork).

On such occasions people would ask about who I was and what I was up to in town. There were different tones that I noticed in such conversations, depending on how I responded to people. When I said that I was learning about the problem of teenage pregnancy (a topic of the bigger project to which I was affiliated) then the discussion would focus on traditional practices and poverty as the major causes. But when I responded that I was interested in adolescent sexuality in general, the locus of the conversation would concentrate on the question of moral decay due to ongoing social transformation in the town. Two things were indicative here, one is conceptual – that adolescents are only shaped by cultural and structural influences, either from within or beyond the town. This is typical of the conventional and dominant discourses. The second is methodological – that different questions generate different knowledge, and the limits of interviews. Another encounter in the field can shed more light to the two aspects.



During the first phase of my fieldwork, I was involved in a video project in which young people visualized causes of teenage pregnancy. This video project as well as my whole PhD study was embedded in a larger research endeavour.<sup>47</sup> Through this project I gathered about 200 essays from boys and girls of Umoja Secondary School in Mtwara Town. The students were asked to write about their experiences concerning teenage pregnancy. Again, reading through the essays, I was struck by the normative expressions of adolescent sexuality and how the conventional views have been internalized, at least in the minds of the adolescents.

Inasmuch as the normative ideals are important in terms of situating actions in contexts, it was critical for me to explore the dynamics inherent in adolescents' sexual practices. The commitment to grasp views, intentions, feelings and actions was sensitized by my conceptual framework which zooms into agentive and creative dimensions of social action. As such, the essays stimulated the need to iron out issues on which I should pay more attention during interviews and during observation and participation. The bottom line was to strive to arrive at the nuances of the phenomenon under study, or what Charmaz (2006: 14) would call "rich data" as opposed to "mundane data and routine report" (see also Carter and Little 2007).

The processes of recruiting research assistants who would assist in the administration of questionnaires during the survey also provided some insightful moments. Perhaps I should speak a little bit about the survey here. The survey was a major component in the research design of the project to which I was affiliated. It was thus necessary that I carry out not "a little" but "a large" survey involving 500 adolescent girls in Mtwara Town. I will come back to the quantitative approach in a while. Suffice it to pinpoint here that I

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<sup>47</sup> My PhD project was closely affiliated with the larger research project "Sexual and Reproductive Resilience of Adolescents in East and West Africa" (2009-2013) led by Dr. Constanze Pfeiffer and Dr. Collins Ahorlu. This research project was conducted in the framework of the Swiss National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South, an international research programme co-funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and examined sexual and reproductive resilience of adolescents in two research sites in Tanzania (East Africa), namely Dar es Salaam and Mtwara, and in two research sites in Ghana (West Africa), namely Accra and Fanteakwa District.

needed female assistants preferably within the same age group as the respondents (15-19).

It was during the fourth month of my fieldwork that I started searching for assistants in Mtwara Town. At first, I posted an advertisement on different notice boards, with my phone number and email address. As a result, I received a few applications by emails and calls. Unfortunately none of them qualified as they were beyond the age limit of 23. Thus, I exploited the earlier mentioned networks of colleagues and former students. Ultimately, I interviewed fifteen girls and selected six of them. The selected girls had grown up in Mtwara Town and, with the exception of one girl, they all had just completed their ordinary secondary education in 2010.

The interviews were also quite informative about what is going on in town as regards the sexuality of adolescents, but again I was confronted with the ideals because they needed to show that they were informed about the conventional discourse. But one thing I observed in the process of interviewing the girls was quite telling. I first noticed that most of them were somehow uncomfortable sitting in the place where I was interviewing them, that is, outside a mini supermarket where there was an outdoor pub. When asked one of them after the interview, she told me that they were afraid of being labelled as loose girls or prostitutes. According to her, the place was associated with strangers/visitors in town who, apart from boozing, were seeking “loose girls”. In that respect one of the issues important to explore was forms of (self) representation among girls in the town. I trained the six girls on the questionnaire and some basic interviewing skills for three days. It was also from these six that I picked my field assistant (Fatma) for the ethnographic fieldwork.



Plate 3.1: Research assistants for the survey

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Based on statistical assumptions and rigorous calculations, a random sample of 500 adolescent girls (15-19 years) was recruited in Mtwara Town. Using the cluster sampling method, twenty-two out of ninety *mitaa* (streets) of Mtwara Town were covered. To arrive at that number, calculations of households per each ten-cell unit (TCU) per Mtaa per Wards were computed. I consulted authorities to obtain the sampling frame so that at times I had to affiliate myself with the ruling party, CCM, in order to get the number of TCUs because the latter is currently a party structure. All females of 15-19 years, living in the selected TCUs were interviewed. This way the survey neatly covered both, that is, in school and out of school adolescent girls. Because the interest was on teenage pregnancy and motherhood, the survey also accommodated both those who had never been pregnant (at least, in principle, taking into account the prevalence of induced abortion) and those who had been pregnant at least once. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to assess the demographic background, SRH experience and practice, social connections with significant others and participation in interventions, in order to learn about reproductive resilience. The questionnaire also focused on teenage pregnancy as a

SRH risk (from the expert conception or view) and how adolescent deal with it (see appendix 1).

Quantitative data processing and analysis was done with the aid of the software programme PASW18. Emphasis has been placed on univariate, bivariate, and multi-variate analysis to examine frequencies of responses, association between variables (correlation) and causality as regards adolescent sexual and reproductive resilience. Although the analysis produced some striking general patterns to think about, it was insufficient to allow for an understanding of the everyday dynamics of adolescent's sexual practices. For instance, results showed that adolescents were consulting media or parents for information on how to avoid pregnancy, but it was almost impossible to explain how and why, based on the statistics. As I show later in the finding chapters, ethnographic analysis found that adolescents rarely ask their parents about matters related to sexuality because such an action compromises their (girls') efforts to conceal sexual activities from their parents. This would mean that the media could be suitable for the purpose. Nonetheless, closer ethnographic examination on how adolescents engage with media was also at odds with the statistics (see chapters eight and nine).

It would however be naive to say that I did not gain any insight from the statistical analysis, because I did. One such notable insight is worth of mentioning here. In line with what I had tentatively observed in the field (during the first three months) for further attention, the statistical results plausibly suggested that adolescent girls, regardless of their reproductive status, were striving for a good reputation as regards their sexual practices. In addition, the data implied that the girls felt accepted in their communities. Although these critical findings were deficient in the precious "statistical significances", they proved to be more than significant for me. In particular, they triggered several questions in relation to sexual inter-subjectivity beyond the realms of both the survey and statistical analysis. I would like to mention only three here.

One is, what forms of social respectability or, in this context, sexual reputation exist in Mtwara Town? The second is whether or not different forms of sexual subjectivity

overlap and why? Lastly, relates to tracing the moments that unearth the overlapping subjectivity in the actions of adolescents. The questions are also far beyond the reach of participant observation (Charmaz 2006). Reflection on such questions alludes to Marcus' call for multi-sited ethnography (2002) as pointed out earlier. As such, it not only required an understanding of inter-subjective engagements of my research participants but also "intersubjectivity as part of ethnographic participation" (Förster 2011: 11, see also Jackson 1998). This brings me to the second phase of fieldwork.

A great deal of ethnographic data for this thesis was generated during what I call the second phase of my fieldwork between May and November 2011. About forty adolescents, twenty male and twenty females were consistently followed up over a period of six months. This does not mean that ethnographic practices during this time did not pay attention to other actors, as I elaborate below. What this means is that more efforts were invested in participating in the lives of selected participants along with observation and in-depth conversations or interviews. The idea was to gain deeper and more focused understanding, which could not be attained through random single encounters with an array of actors. Here the value of repeated encounters with the same research participant was evident in the evolving intersubjective engagements between the researchers and adolescents as well as some of their family members. Before I delve into detail of what happened during the six visits (in some cases it was less or more), let me first describe the processes of recruiting research participants.

Starting with the twenty girls, these were selected from the original sample of 500 girls who were interviewed during the survey. Using a computerized systematic random selection within the resilience framework that guided the survey, ten girls considered to have high resilience and ten with low resilience were picked. I should also note here that since resilience is a normative term and because pregnancy was considered a threat from the experts' point of view, their lived experiences blurred the artificial categories (see chapters five and six). As for the boys, I recruited them through different encounters during the first phase of my fieldwork. The most important parameter for me was diversity in their sexual experiences. I also ensured that I got boys from both the town

and Mikindani divisions of Mtwara Municipal. In both cases, I was interested in boys and girls who had spent the most part of their adolescence in Mtwara Town (not necessarily the Makonde).



Plate 3.2: One of the in-depth interviews

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The starting point during the first visit consisted of general enquiries about living arrangements and talks about adolescence and relationships.<sup>48</sup> Unsurprisingly, despite the fact that my field assistant and I had already met with the girls at least briefly during the survey, it was clear to me that girls felt shy to tell their stories in front of a stranger who happened to be a man older than themselves. Some would simply cut the story short, other would keep the conversation in line with the dominant sexual norms, and few others actually opened up. The situation improved, especially from the third visit onward, when several of the participants became friends of Fatma (my field assistant). Since we spent time at their homes, sometimes just observing interactions or getting involved in

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<sup>48</sup> Issues that I had started reflecting upon in the first phase provided the basis for topics in conversations and observation prior to gaining grounds for participation. I also benefited from Prof. Brigit Obrist's feedback on the weekly reports I shared with her as the main supervisor.

conversations about different aspects of the research topic, ground for participation started opening up. In some cases we exchanged contacts with the girls and we would get text messages or missed calls (“beeping”) from the girls<sup>49</sup>. In others, we were invited to birthday parties of the girls or their babies. We were also asked for, or volunteered to offer, drinks or a meal at a pub or restaurant, and occasionally asked or were asked for company to the disco or a nightclub. During the conversations, often Fatma would throw in a general question and, in course of the talk, I would probe and encourage the rhythm of conversation. Observation included specific aspects of interactions of the respective girl with parents, neighbours, (boy) friend(s), use of mobile phone, dressing styles and non-verbal expressions among others.

Our visits would take between thirty minutes to five hours or more, depending on readiness of the girls and events taking place at home (busy with duties, going out, not feeling well, party, prepared special meal for us etc).<sup>50</sup> In some cases girls asked us to meet outside their homes. We spent long hours with girls whose parents considered us as friends of their daughters. Some of the girls would visit Fatma (my field assistant) hence providing an opportunity to learn more about them. As I portray in chapter eight, for example, over time even our interactions and friendships with the girls could be transformed by the latter into spaces or opportunities of sexual encounters. This happened with Asia, as I recount later. In short, Fatma and I were caught by surprise on one of our visits when the father of Asia asked about Fatma’s illness condition, because Asia had asked for permission two days earlier to visit Fatma on the grounds of sickness. Because Fatma had not seen her, it became clear, as Asia later confirmed to Fatma, that she had used the opportunity to spend the night with her boyfriend. What is interesting here in relation to intersubjectivity is that Asia did not inform Fatma about her plan; she either forgot or simply did not want to tell her, or she knew for sure that, if anything, she could count on Fatma’s favour to cover up for her.

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<sup>49</sup> Missed calls or “beeping” is among mobile communication practices (see Ling and Campbell (2009).

<sup>50</sup> Each round of visits with male and female adolescents focused on different issues but which were linked to the previous visit to the respective adolescent.

As regards visiting boys, I did all the visiting by myself. Unlike in the girls' case, it was easier to arrange visits with boys because they were more flexible in terms of the time and meeting points. What was interesting for me was their openness. In their rooms which they commonly refer to as *ghettos*, for example, they could show me photos of their girlfriends, Valentine Cards from girlfriends, even flowers. However, this did not mean that there was no silence in their accounts of sexual practices. Whereas some would paint an image of being sexually active in line with the peer expectation, even though they were not, others would under report their sexual encounters. It was indeed through participation that I was able to uncover the discrepancy (see, for example, portrait 6.3 in chapter six).

Apart from the visits, I also conducted a total of four FGDs with parents, two for female parents, and two for male parents in each division. These were conducted towards the very end of the second phase of my fieldwork. As pointed out earlier, the aim was to juxtapose the views, experiences and practices of the adolescents in relation to sexuality against the often counterviews and practices of the parents. Specifically, I explored with the parents such issues as adolescence today compared to the past, traditional rites involving adolescents (*jando/unyago*) and how young people managed to live their sexuality despite parents' constraints. Likewise, I engaged in conversations with other community members such as neighbours, peers and religious and other community leaders throughout the fieldwork.

Important to note, hanging out in streets and other urban spaces went on throughout my fieldwork. As such, a number of interviews and conversations were also conducted with several other adolescents in different situations (market, in commuter/*daladala*, restaurant, bank, neighbourhood, *kijiweni/maskani*, ghetto etc) and other residents of Mtwara Town (tax drivers, bajaji /tricycle and motor cycle drivers, teachers, religious leaders, community leaders and friends).





Plate 3.3: Focus group discussion with parents

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The last but short phase of my fieldwork covered the period of December 2012 and the first week of January 2013. Since I had already worked more on data analysis and interpretation (I return to this below), the additional visits had two major purposes. Firstly, the idea was to follow up with the adolescents to see what had changed over the period of one year in terms of their sexual and reproductive lives. This was important because I had already underlined some dynamics in the six visits. It was also striking to see that the sense of attachment created during our encounter with the research participants during the first and second phase of the fieldwork was still alive. Fatma continued her friendship with several of the girls. The one round of visits we conducted in December 2012 was characterized by an extremely rich flow of conversation, disclosing some dimensions of sexual practices that had been silenced in the previous encounters.

Secondly, I wanted to validate or seek clarification on matters that needed confirmation in the field. One such issue that surfaced in the analysis was on a question important for intersubjective life. This was about secrecy or efforts by adolescents to conceal their sexual activities from their parents. Specifically I was struck by the fact that while parents may seem not to know, the other members of community were informed about the respective adolescents' sexual activities in one way or the other. In addition, I wanted to learn why the others, including neighbours and fellow parents, do not volunteer to notify the parent of the respective adolescent about the latter's practices. It was within this context that I organized what I call "validation meeting". The latter involved parents, adolescents, teachers and religious leaders. I discuss with empirical details how various actors reflected on the necessity for silence/secrecy in certain realms of the social in the findings chapters.

Overall, the ethnographic fieldwork was smooth and successful. This is evident on the level of intersubjective engagements that we attained to the extent that the majority of research participants felt at ease and continued with their normal life, regardless of our presence. In most cases both girls and boys kept on chatting on cellular phones, talking with other family members or greeting friends and neighbours passing by. In addition, the calls, invitations and requests received from the boys and girls, their parents and neighbours, suggest the intensity of participation in daily life situations of, and frequency of encounters with the research participants. I should however highlight a few challenges I encountered. First, some participants rarely kept appointments, something that required considerable flexibility on the part of the researchers. Second, about five adolescents emigrated from the town at different times of the fieldwork. One during the second visit, two during the fourth and another two during fifth. Third, I somehow felt insecure when visiting married girls on the initial visit as I was not sure about the response of their husbands. Related to this was an instance during the fifth visit when Fatma told me that one of the female research participants had problems with her boyfriend because of our frequent visits to her home. In fact he thought that I was engaging or proposing to marry her (*kumchumbia*). For him, my conversations with the girl and her parents focused on a

marriage proposal. Interestingly, we found out later that his suspicions triggered him to officially submit a marriage proposal to her parents (*barua ya uchumba*).

Fourth, participation especially in the night life in Mtwara was interesting but also challenging, especially because I had not been to nightclubs since the 1990s. In particular, the performances in clubs started as late as midnight. This is when you see many people arriving. Even in situations where there is a party, then the disco time would go on until well after midnight. So when I wanted to observe what happened at the end of the show, in which state the young people were. Bearing in mind that they were dancing and drinking alcohol, how did young people make their way out? with whom? And by which means? Often I had to wait, and sometimes I was tired and risked missing transport back home.

Last but not least, being approached by both boys and girls to help them out in their conflicts with their partners provided me with information they would not tell me in an interview, but it was also challenging to mediate between two parties, sometimes three parties in the case of collision of partners.

Before winding up this chapter with a word on ethical considerations, I should briefly highlight the analytical strategy adapted in the analysis of wide-ranging ethnographic material in order to allow for interpretation. This is very crucial because quite often anthropologists have been accused of lacking analytical rigor in their work (Charmaz 2006). Just like Thorne (2000), I claim that the accusation is partly due to the fact that readers, especially non-anthropologists, have difficulties to understand the less explicit analytic strategy used in most anthropological work. This is especially because often the painstaking processes of organizing, analyzing and interpreting ethnographic materials are not explicitly outlined.

Understandably, the crucial fact is that ethnographic data analysis is inseparable from the data itself. Nevertheless, it is a truism that at a particular point in the life span of the ethnographic enquiry, data analysis emerges as an explicit step, especially when the data

set as a whole is conceptually interpreted applying specific analytic strategies. Here, raw ethnographic materials are transformed into a new and coherent depiction of the social phenomenon under study (see Thorne 2000, Charmaz 2006).

In the context of the present study, the overall data processing and organization of ethnographic data was done using MAXQDA2007 software after the second phase of fieldwork. Though following the logic of coding in grounded theory, the computer programme only helped sort and organize the bulk of raw data generated in more than twelve months. I then had to embark on the next steps of conceptualizing and transforming the data into meaningful findings. This required engaging several analytic strategies<sup>51</sup> in line with my research question and conceptual framework. However, two analytical processes proved to be more adequate in the context of this study.

The first is constant comparative analysis, which is popular in grounded theory methods (Thorne 2000, Charmaz 2006). I compared and contrasted each piece of data with the rest in order to have a feeling of some of the similarities and differences in the enactment of adolescent sexual practices. The essence of this analytic approach is to arrive at an understanding of common patterns within human experience. As such it has a heavy iterative tone. Along with, and related to, comparative analysis, I also ventured into the common ethnographic analysis that seeks to arrive at a typology of interpretations, relations and variations within human experience in a given social and cultural setting. Although this is vital in the analysis of social action, I had to branch off to another strategy in attempt to go beyond the patterned experiences.

The shortcomings of the above brought me to the second analytic strategy: phenomenological reduction and hermeneutic analysis. Here, the emphasis is not on patterns in human experiences, but the underlying structure of that experience. This is only possible through intensive study of individual cases (Thorne 2000). Thus, apart from a cross comparison of adolescents' sexual practices, I focused on the depth and detail of

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<sup>51</sup> For a snapshot on different analytic strategies as used in qualitative health research, see Thorne's (2000) *Data analysis in qualitative research*.

the lived experiences. This demand for reflective engagement with the data which is why I include my own reflections and interpretations in the detailed portrayal of selected cases. The major aim is to illuminate diversity and complexity in the lived sexual and reproductive experiences of the adolescents.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

In order to conduct a health related research in Tanzania it is a requirement to secure a research clearance from the National Health Research Ethics Review Committee (NHRERC). The latter is a sub-committee of the Medical Research Coordinating Committee of the National Institute for Medical Research, Tanzania. Thus, research clearance for the present study was granted by the named body. Among the key concerns of the NHRERC is to “safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and well being of all study participants and communities” (NIMR 2007: 2)<sup>52</sup>. Special attention is paid to studies that include vulnerable participants. The latter, according to the mainstream conception of sexual and reproductive health as indicated earlier, included adolescents.

Since several dimensions of research ethics are malleable with the epistemological ones, it was indeed inevitable to seek consent from parents of adolescents below eighteen while those who were eighteen and older consented themselves. For instance, to be able to visit adolescents at their homes, it was vital to have the parental consent even for the adolescents who were over eighteen. Furthermore, for a “thick” participation in the lives of the research participants, respect, dignity and honesty are among the pre-requisites. In addition, maintaining privacy and confidentiality of the participants is not only critical for sustaining some sense of “trust”, it is also a well established tradition in ethnography to protect the people we study. Specifically, ethnographers have to underline “the

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<sup>52</sup> This is in line with several international agreements as regards researching human subjects. Such agreements were triggered by notorious examples of unethical research, such as the Tuskegee syphilis study (1932-1972) whose experiments were conducted in the concentrated camps during the WW II. Another one is the study on obedience conducted in the 1960s in the US by Milgram (te Riele 2013: 4). In that respect, the Nuremberg Code (1947) and the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) were put in place mainly in relation to medical research and the need for research ethics committees and policies in several western countries (te Riele 2013: 4). Other similar agreements at the international level include: International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects; WHO and ICH Guidelines for Good Clinical Practices outline ethical and scientific standards for biomedical research (NIMR 2007: 2).

responsibility of individual researcher to monitor and respond to ethical issues” (Christensen and Prout (2002:478). In keeping with the valued tradition, all the names of the participants have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Although it is beyond the scope of this section to grapple with the critical discussions around ethical considerations in social research, it is worth noting that ethical questions on how to undertake research “are deeply connected with the content of social theory” (Christensen and Prout 2002: 478, see also Kleinman 1999). This is even more so when it comes to studying children and adolescents as social actors with agency, in contrast to most formal ethical frameworks, which treat them as vulnerable and minors (Christensen and Prout 2002, te Riele and Brooks 2013). This is why ethical considerations and challenges in studying young people such as adolescents are increasingly attracting scholarly attention (te Riele and Brooks 2013).

For example, te Riele and Brooks’ (2013) *Negotiating Ethical Challenges in Youth research*, is grounded on the argument that like any social research, youth research “inevitably poses” researchers with “ethical challenges” (te Riele 2013: 3). Introducing the volume, te Riele (2013:3) posits that the challenges of studying youth are wide-ranging and they differ in terms of “the extent to which they are predictable or unexpected, major or minor.” Accordingly, ethical conduct of youth research demands “deliberation of values and principles, the exercise of judgment, and an appreciation of contexts.” Taking into account issues of power and agency invokes critical views on the formal framework for ethical youth research. Western sensibilities that inform these frameworks are usually challenged in practice. New questions are being posed beyond the formal ethical frames. For instance, Walsh et al. (2013) offer critical reflection on how young people are framed, and the limits of using such findings to support simplistic essentializing discourses in youth policy as an ethical question. Here the risk of misrepresentation ought to be taken seriously.

### 3.4 Summary

The major aim in this chapter was to make a reflected account of methodological issues critical to the understanding of adolescent sexual and reproductive practices as social action and, by extension, from the actor's position. The reflections are situated within the current discussions about ethnographic practices in anthropology today. It is beyond doubt that contemporary waves of social transformations in both Western and non-Western societies, along with the shifting theoretical trends in anthropology, have created a demand for re-thinking traditional ethnographic practices. As such the present study has privileged a multi-sited ethnographic paradigm, keyed to both the intersubjective life of the research participants and inter-subjective engagements between the ethnographer and the other. In effect, sustained participation along with observation and conversations (in-depth interviews) constituted the major methods for data generation.

Apart from initial analysis of generated data during fieldwork, the entire data set was processed with the aid of a computer programme for qualitative data analysis following the completion of the first two and long phases of fieldwork. The programme only aided in rendering the bulk of raw data amenable for further analysis and interpretation. To avoid the common unfounded accusation from readers beyond the frontiers of anthropology, the major analytic strategies are explicitly explained. The strategies enable an inductive explanation on how adolescents go about enacting sexual and reproductive practices in various situations. Important is an understanding of why individual adolescents act in certain ways in particular situations, and not otherwise. Thus, rather than simply seeking for commonalities and differences in patterned experiences of the actors, more than one analytic strategy have been employed in order to unearth the nuances of actor's lived experiences.

Ultimately, the ethnographic engagement with adolescents not only demands coming to terms with certain ethical requirements, but also invokes ethical challenges. In concrete term, whereas the need for sustained participation demands commitment on the part of the ethnographer toward the participants' dignity and respect, approaching adolescents as

actors in their own right poses ethical challenges. The latter becomes more evident in relation to universalistic, medicalized and psychologized formal ethical frameworks. It is therefore credible to say that in the above context, an ethnographer may need to negotiate between the limits of formal ethical frameworks and the agency of adolescents, beyond rational and normative constructs.



#### 4. MTWARA TOWN: CINDERELLA'S CINDERELLA OF TANZANIA?

My research site is the rapidly (re)growing coastal town of Mtwara<sup>53</sup> in Southern Tanzania, on the boarder between Tanzania and Mozambique. The town is located 552 kilometres from Dar es Salaam, the major city in the country. Administratively, Mtwara Town is the headquarters of Mtwara region<sup>54</sup> and Mtwara Mikindani municipal council. It has two divisions (Town and Mikindani), fifteen wards, and eighty-five *mitaa* (streets). Whereas the Town division has seventy *mitaa* (streets), Mikindani division has fourteen *mitaa* (streets). The town also has six villages, one in the Town division and five in the Mikindani division (see plate: 4.1).

##### 4.1 History and people

Historically, Mtwara Town was established by the British colonial regime in the 1940s following the aspiration to advance the ambitious groundnut scheme, so they moved their headquarters from Mikindani (see Rizzo 2004). It was during this time that the current port of Mtwara was constructed, along with a railway line linking the port to the interior areas where groundnuts were to be produced. Despite the failure of the schemes, as I will discuss later, the fame of the ancient coastal town of Mikindani went to Mtwara Town (see Pawlowicz 2012).

According to the 2012 national population and housing census, Mtwara Town has a total population of 108,299 people (NBS 2013), marking a slight increase from about 92,602 people as per the 2002 population and housing census (NBS 2002). According to the 2012 census, Mtwara region has a total population of 1,270,854 people, marking a growth rate of 1.2 from the year 2002. Additionally, Mtwara region has recorded the lowest average household size in the country (3.7). The average household size for Mtwara Town is 3.8 (NBS 2013).

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<sup>53</sup> Etymologically, the term *mtwara* comes from the Makonde word *kutwala* which means seizing or snatching something (see URT 2011: 2). It has a lot to do with the migration history of the Makonde (see Liebenow 1971, Halley 2012).

<sup>54</sup> Mtwara region is located at the southern angle of Tanzania. It borders with the Lindi region in the north; the Indian Ocean on the east; the Ruvuma River which separates Tanzania from Mozambique; and on its west is the Ruvuma region.

Although it has attracted migrants from other parts of Tanzania, the Makonde remain the dominant ethnic group in Mtwara region and Mtwara Town (about 84%). Historically, the Makonde of Tanzania have lived around the Makonde Plateau on both sides of the river Ruvuma, which forms the border between Tanzania and Mozambique (URT 2011).<sup>55</sup> The majority of the Makonde of Tanzania lives in Mtwara urban district, Mtwara rural district and Newala district in Mtwara region. Other major ethnic groups in Mtwara Town include the Makua, Mwera and Yao. Increasingly, there are several other ethnic groups in the town such as the Chaga, Sukuma, Pare, Ngoni, and Haya, to mention but a few.

Very briefly, as an ethnic group the Makonde are divided into three sub-groups, namely the Nnima people, the Ndonde people and the Maraba people. The Maraba are part of the Swahili coastal culture, which, next to their Makonde origin, has informed their cultural and historical identity, reflected in their religion (Islam), their fishing practices, the way they dress and their language, which is strongly influenced by Swahili (Kraal 2005). Traditionally the Makonde are matrilineal in their social organization. The most important man of the family used to be the *njomba*, the elder brother of the mother (see Liebenow 1971).

In the remaining part of this chapter I discuss the history, along with contemporary social and cultural formations of Mtwara Town. Here I am interested in the sedimented traditions, values and social imaginaries that have constituted the lifeworld(s) of the people of Mtwara at different epochs. The bottom line is to grasp the *intersectionality* of multiple social, cultural, economic, political and personal realities in Mtwara Town as a point of departure towards a compelling analysis of adolescents' sexual and reproductive actions/practices. The explanatory value of this approach lies in the ability to look at

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<sup>55</sup> For a detailed account on the history of the Makonde of Tanzania, see Liebenow's (1971) *Colonial rule and political development in Tanzania: the case of the Makonde*.

social actions as sites where seemingly notorious binaries such as traditional/modern, local/global, /past/present and rural/urban are interwoven.

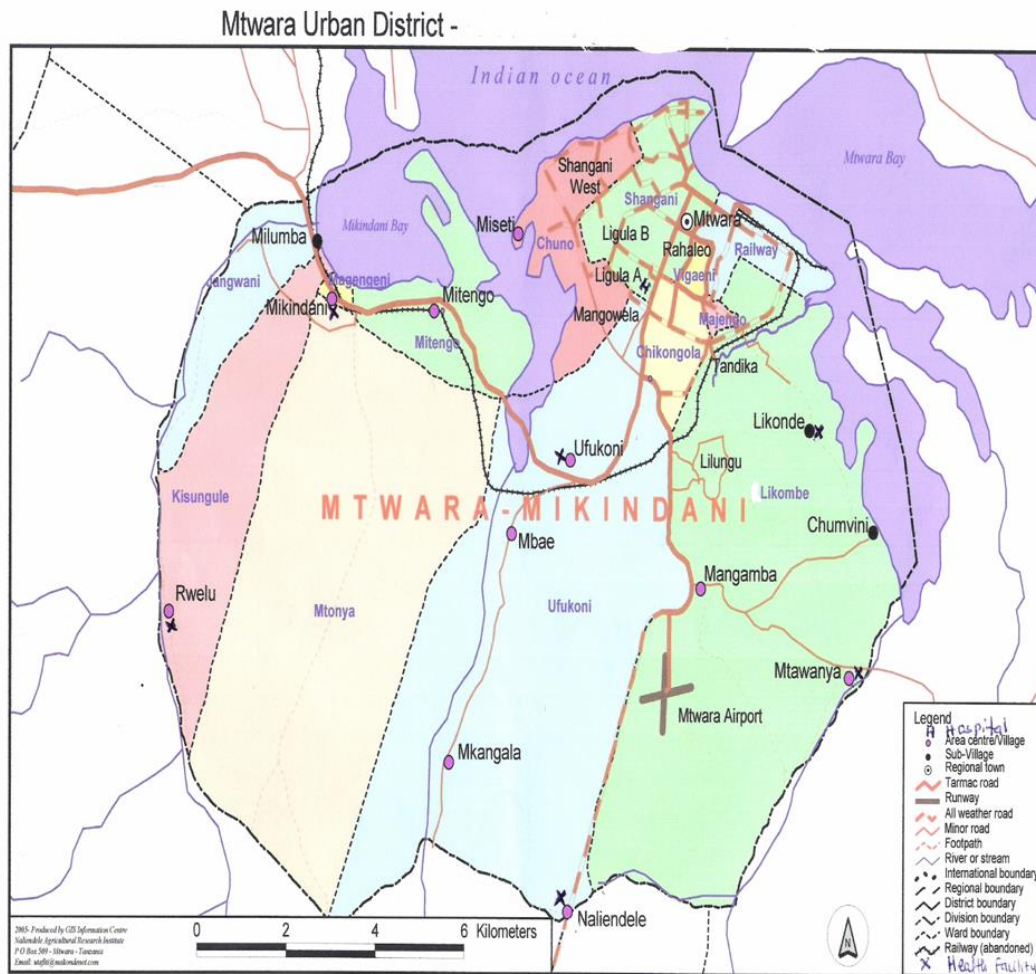


Plate 4.1: Map of Mtwara Town

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Right from the outset I should stress that a critical reflection on historical and archaeological facts along with current empirical realities about Mtwara Town, allows for a credible anthropological understanding of the contemporary Mtwara beyond what I call the “isolation” thesis. The latter has gained popularity not only among politicians, development experts, activists and the public but also in the scientific community since the 1980s (see, for example, Seppälä and Koda 1998, Wembah-Rashid 1998, Swantz 1996, Halley 2012). Based on the fact that there were poor roads linking Mtwara to other regions prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is tempting to agree with the “isolation” thesis which claims that Mtwara has been isolated within the Tanzanian state leading to the imaginary “north-south” divide. Nevertheless, a closer look at the history and lived experiences of the people of Mtwara points to wide range of inter-connections between the people of

Mtwara and the rest of Tanzania and beyond, throughout their history (see Liebenow 1971, Rizzo 2006, Pawlowicz 2009, URT 2011).

It is argued that the contemporary “rapid” social change taking place in Mtwara ought to be understood beyond the structuralism paradigm which, in its strongest sense, tends to see structures as stable. As such, change is located outside the structure, in history (in a narrow sense of history), in notions of breakdown and in influences exogenous to the system in question (Sewell 1992). This view makes two tenuous assumptions in relation to Mtwara. One is that societies in Mtwara have never changed without influence from outside Mtwara. The second is that external influences are often desired by the people of Mtwara. In sharp contrast with the two assumptions, it has been documented that people of Mtwara, like others elsewhere in the world, have appropriated, rejected and allowed for co-existence of conflicting cultural values and practices throughout their history (Rizzo 2006, Helgesson 2006, cf. Hannerz 1987). In fact, Hannerz has earlier reminded that “people largely live their lives in contexts shaped by them” (1987: 552). What this simply means is that influences on people’s lives have been there, but it is the people themselves who in the end actively engage with such forces in their own, but meaningful ways. Several examples could be inserted here but for the sake of brevity, I will focus on just a few.

Just like most coastal towns on the Indian Ocean coast of East Africa (see Loimeier and Seesemann 2006, Mapunda and Luoga 2012, Sigalla and Sambaiga 2012), Mtwara Town, and especially Mikindani has had a long history of participating in broader coastal and interregional trade connections (see Pawlowicz 2009). Gray (1950) underlined earlier that historically Mikindani was the centre of the region’s interactions with the wider Indian Ocean world. In his archaeological exploration of Mikindani area, Mathew Pawlowicz examined how “past communities in the region *participated* in the economic and cultural systems of the East African Swahili coast during the second millennium AD” (emphasis added). He concluded that:

(... ) Mikindani is involved in a dynamic and unique relationship with other communities of East African coast and the Indian Ocean world, a relationship whose character shifts at different moments in coastal history and which

reflects both *changing* external influences and the existence of a *self-sufficient* local economy (2009: 41, 49. emphasis added)

One of the remarkable indications of the above interconnections was the spread of Islam in the coastal communities of Mtwara (see Liebenow 1971). Following Beidelman (1967), Halley (2012: 106) highlights the impact of Islam on the kinship system of the Makonde as the “recognition of paternal control over children by Islamic law” which gradually “shifted Makonde matrilineal customs toward one in which descent was primarily reckoned through the paternal family line.” Interestingly, Islam was appropriated into the traditions of the coastal people of Mtwara.

Harries (1944), for example, underscores how male circumcision was introduced into *jando* (male initiation rituals) and became part of the traditional ritual system (even though it takes on a different shape today, especially in Mtwara Town). Harries also speaks about Christianized *jando*, that is adjusting the practice to Christian values, which, in turn, means that Christianity opened a window to accommodate so-called traditional beliefs and customs. In contrast to Halley (2012:105) who suggests that the Arab tradition of female circumcision in the practice of *sunnah* “has largely replaced the traditional *unyago*”, I argue that the latter is still practised. The only exception is that it has taken different shapes as individuals creatively adapt to changing contexts (see chapter five).

Another rich example of the degree of appropriation brings me to the colonial era in Tanganyika. Both during the German and British colonial presence in Tanganyika, Mtwara was placed under the Southern province, which included today’s Mtwara, Lindi and Ruvuma regions.<sup>56</sup> I am interested here in the tension between Islam and the colonial “civilizing mission”.<sup>57</sup> The latter was championed along with colonial explorations and missionary work. For instance, after his visit to Mikindani in 1866, David Livingstone inspired the establishment of the Universities Missions to Central Africa (UMCA) which

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<sup>56</sup> For a snapshot of the early history, see Mikindani Bay before 1887, Tanganyika Notes and Records (TNR) No. 28 (January 1950: 29-37).

<sup>57</sup> For critical sociological examination of the colonial civilization project in Tanganyika, see Chachage’s (1988) *British Rule and African Civilization in Tanganyika*.

established itself in Mtwara and Lindi. Towards the end of nineteenth century, the German Benedictines also anchored in the two regions (see Swantz 1996, Ranger 1979). They both introduced Western (colonial) education, along with Christianity.

Thus, the churches started primary schools in selected villages, secondary schools (such as Mtwara girls, Ndanda and Mtwara technical schools, teachers training colleges, and medical workers training, among others (Swantz 1996). Relatively speaking, the civilizing mission was more successful in the inland areas compared to the coast (see Liebenow 1971). Apparently most Muslims were reluctant to convert to Christianity (Iliffe 2006). More precisely, colonial and early post-colonial education “did not penetrate the Muslim communities” (Swantz 1996: 7).<sup>58</sup> Here, Islam provided a space for the local people to maintain their “traditional” way of life, and parents resisted entering their children to school until recently.<sup>59</sup>

To give freshness to the point, I cite from my conversations with the father of one of my informants (Amanda’s father) about the challenges of child rearing in contemporary Mtwara. Amanda’s father recounted, among other things, that following the consent of Muslim parents to send their children to schools, there has been an increase of what he calls “moral decays”. He clarified that, in the past, people of coastal Mtwara (*wa mwambao*) insisted on religious education (*madrassa/elimu ahera*) for their children while the others in inland Mtwara such as the Masasi concentrated on formal education (*elimu dunia*). According to him children were disciplined, and this was evident, for example, in a girl’s ability to maintain virginity until marriage. Amanda’s father is also aware that at that time both early marriage and teenage pregnancy were valued because after the initiation that followed puberty, a girl would immediately get married (see also Harries 1944, Liebenow 1971).

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<sup>58</sup> On the efforts by the British Government to win over the Muslims into the civilizing mission, see Griffiths and Serjeant’s (1958) *Report by the fact-Finding Mission to Study Muslim education in East Africa*.

<sup>59</sup> On how German colonial rule was imposed in some parts of Mtwara through some half-caste Islamic leaders (Makonde/Arabu) who were more accepted by the Makonde compared to the missionaries, see Iliffe (2009), Cory (1947). See also Rizzo (2004) on how the British colonial government used “native” authority to exercise indirect colonial rule in the Southern Province.

In short, Amanda's father underlined that "today we have turned to formal education and ignored religious education, something that breeds early pregnancy" (*sasa hivi tumeweka mkazo kwenye 'elimu dunia' tumesahau 'elimu ahera' matokeo yake ndio mimba hizi za utotoni*)<sup>60</sup>. This further shows the extent to which Islam has become part of the traditions for the coastal people. I come back to this point when I explain the ethnic groups in Mtwara and their traditions.

Furthermore, what is propounded in the "isolation" discourse masks the fact that individuals and groups in Mtwara have actively participated in both the colonial and post-colonial projects within and outside the region. With reference to what Liebenow (1971) had referred to as the "Cinderella's Cinderella" of the British's colonial empire, Rizzo (2006) ponders on the "unintended" impact of the "East Africa Groundnut Scheme in Tanganyika". The scheme is one of the popular but infamous Britain's failed "ambitions of the British late colonial developmentalism" (Rizzo 2006: 205). Unlike many of the historians and anthropologists (see Liebenow 1971, Swantz 1996, Seppälä & Koda 1998, Halley 2012) whose analysis of the project only present structural constraints and associated problems of the scheme, Rizzo (2006) points to people's lived experiences in relation to the scheme (see also Becker 2001).<sup>61</sup> Based on explorations of the life histories of former scheme workers, Matteo Rizzo unearths that some of the workers "became significant entrepreneurs/accumulators in trade, transport and farming (Rizzo 2006: 212). This suggests that individual members of the Mtwara population transformed what is condemned as terrible moments of the scheme into "days of prosperity" (Rizzo 2006: 213, see also Rizzo 2004). Some passages from Rizzo are illustrative here. Based on archival sources Rizzo (2006: 27) reports:

"(...) it was observed that 'the influx of the European connected with the groundnut project and its ancillary schemes' had brought '*a big boom to trade* in little township of (Old) Mikindani'. This continued once more into 1949, described as '*a very busy and progressive*' year in Mikindani. All forms of revenue increased, and traders were reported to be prospering. Despite a disappointing agricultural season, the local population seemed to be contended with '*plenty of money available*', the effect of the

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<sup>60</sup> Amanda's father invited me to his home for a chat (*mazungumzo*) during my final field visit in January 2013. Contrary to my expectations, he disclosed to me that his daughter (Amanda) was not attending school lately as she was suspended due to poor academic performance. The situation disturbed Amanda's father and he deliberately invited me to brainstorm other possibilities for Amanda's education.

<sup>61</sup> For details on the Groundnut Scheme, see Wood (1950) *The Groundnut Affair*.



unlimited demands for labour of all sorts. The speed at which the African population adjusted to these unprecedented opportunities forced the colonial administration *to revise its usual assumptions about innate African backwardness*” (emphasis added).

The above clearly depicts that the people of Mtwara were not merely manipulated by the colonial economic projects, but strived to fit in their own interests within the seemingly dominating economic structures. The countless agentive processes of so-called natives were repeatedly reported by the colonial officials in the field yet often missed out by scholars. Perhaps I should provide an example of how individuals did not feel obliged to seek wage employment from time to time, something that frustrated the colonial system. For instance, Rizzo (2006: 229) recounts from the accounts of the Southern province senior agricultural officer:

“(…) some workers accumulated savings from their wages to invest in expanding farm production or in trade rather than continue in wage employment. For these men the high prices of food and other wage goods may have been an incentive to turn to trade, including selling produce from their household farms, rather than return to wage work.”

Another overlooked evidence at odds with the “isolation” thesis is that people of Mtwara have been mobile for ages despite the seemingly constraining physical barriers and infrastructures as outlined by some scholars. Just to emphasize here that in connection with the colonial era is the practice of labour migration. It is well documented that the British colonial administration of Tanganyika had assigned the Southern province the role of supplying labour to other provinces. This was clearly articulated in the “Territory’s division of labor” plan (Rizzo 2006: 219, see also Wood 1950, Liebenow 1971). In other words, Mtwara was considered as “a labor-abundant area” even after the Groundnut scheme had proved the opposite.

What is also important to note here, is that, according to Rizzo (2006:216), the coastal people of Mtwara, mainly the Makonde (Maraba), the Machinga and Mwera, had developed a sense of being what came to be known as “coastal inertia”. The latter prevented them from being in high demanded as labourers. More precisely, they were considered “second-class workers”. As a result, many migrant labourers from further south, especially the Mawia from the Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique), were preferred as quality labourers for meager wages. The Mawia would provide labour in the

sisal plantations for a while before proceeding to Tanga in the north of Tanganyika in search of lucrative wages. Altogether, this adds to the inconclusiveness of the “isolation” discourse during colonial times. This brings me to the post-independence era.

After independence of Tanganyika from the British in 1961, the southern regions, particularly Mtwara,<sup>62</sup> felt the independence struggle of Mozambique – which Tanzania strongly supported. In particular, Mtwara, along with other southern parts of the country, was declared an *emergency area* for security purposes until 1974 when Mozambique attained independence (see Swantz 1996, Seppälä & Koda 1998, Halley 2012). This by no way meant isolation of the region because several development measures were put in place just like in other parts of the country, with the exception of some infrastructure projects, especially roads (see URT 2011). As for the people’s mobility, it is beyond doubt that despite bad roads, people travelled in and outside the region, some using the same bad roads, others went by sea, while yet others had to either walk or ride bicycles.<sup>63</sup> This is precisely what proponents of the “isolation” thesis such as Seppälä and Koda (1998: 11) refer to as “considerable difficulties”.

Various governmental and non-governmental agencies also continued to operate in several development projects in Mtwara (see Swantz 1996, URT 2011). For instance, the state of emergency availed an opportunity for the government to implement the *Ujamaa* Villages Policy, which was primarily geared towards “modernizing” and “developing” the people. Basically, among other things, the idea behind the policy was to foster people’s access to basic social services and development projects. Thus, Mtwara witnessed the first villagization operations in 1960s and 1970s.

Of course, many reasons contributed to the failure of this development project. In any case, sound explanations lie in the engagement of individual actors involved in the

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<sup>62</sup> After independence Mtwara continued to be under the Southern Province together with Ruvuma and Lindi. In 1962 the province was divided into two regions, namely Ruvuma and Mtwara while Lindi became part of Mtwara. It was in 1971 that Lindi was separated from Mtwara region (see URT 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Mtwara has an airport that has been in operation since the colonial times, thus a few people who can afford it, especially the government and development practitioners, did and continue to find their way to and from Mtwara town.

programme.<sup>64</sup> Yet still, several efforts have been in place to promote different sectors in the region. Below I add some statistics to show trends in various social services provision in Mtwara since independence. But let me first highlight the efforts of other actors who have been at the forefront in promoting developmentalism in the region.

Swantz (1996: 18) provides an overview of the key external development programmes that were carried out in the post-colonial Mtwara region. The Finnish International Development Agency has been active not just in Mtwara but also Lindi since 1972, just a year after the two regions were separated. Notably, the agency made and implemented the Regional Water Master Plan between 1980 and 1990. Another agency was the British Overseas Development Administration during the days of Margaret Thatcher (the Iron Lady), which launched the so-called Mtwara Regional Integrated Development Plan 1981-1986. The latter could not be fully implemented following the Iron Lady's decision to cut off aid to Tanzania. Then the Finns came back to offer support to both Mtwara and Lindi region under the famous Integrated Project Support (RIPS) whose implementation ran over two phases. Whereas the first phase lasted between 1988 and 1993, the second phase was undertaken from 1994 to 1999. RIPS' programme focused on a wide range of issues from livelihood, environment to service functions.

The Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA) has also intervened in a rehabilitation programme of tertiary education institutions in Mtwara. The World Bank has also been at the forefront in supporting the agricultural sector, particularly cashew nut production. UN agencies have been active in Mtwara since the 1980 through UNICEF's programmes on child survival protection development and adolescent's sexual and reproductive health (see also Helgesson 2006). There were also about 189 NGOs dealing with HIV/AIDS in Mtwara region by the year 2011 (see URT 2011).

Perhaps Maia Green's (2000) seminal article *Participatory Development and the Appropriation of Agency in Southern Tanzania* resonates my dissatisfaction with the

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<sup>64</sup> For reflections on the philosophy behind *Ujamaa* and villagization programme, its performance and challenges, see Chachage and Chachage's (2005) *Nyerere: nationalism and post-colonial developmentalism*.

explanatory power of the “isolation” discourse, in that, interventions from the state and the above mentioned development agencies do not necessarily match the desires of the individual actors. Some passages can serve to highlight her main argument that popular understandings of so-called “the poor” are often inconsistent with the experts’ notions of development. Emphatically, Maia Green remarks:

“(...) in their struggle for *maendeleo ya mtu binafsi*, ‘the development of a person by themselves’. The goals of personal development encompass a range of lifestyle aspirations, including being more ‘modern’ (*kisasa*), having more education, increased access to off-farm income and, in the context of the pervasive collapse of state services and periodic food insecurity, enough money to provide for a person’s family.(...) Unlike state-sponsored development interventions, or (...) initiatives of foreign NGOs and donors, southern Tanzanians’ understandings of personal development are premised on a recognition of the potentiality of individual agency in bringing about social transformation” (Green 2000:68).

I will return to the institutions targeting adolescent sexuality in Mtwara shortly and later illuminate how the experts’ framework of SRH “risks” do not fit into the respective adolescents’ practical understanding of the same (see chapter seven). Suffice it to point out at this juncture that despite the dominance of the “isolation” discourse, Mtwara region has constantly experienced “modernization” projects during the colonial and post-colonial times. Thus, the issue is not mere positivistic evidence of the presence of the state or the market but how the people of Mtwara have continued to experience and appropriate such structural forces. After all, Förster (2012) has recently reminded us that just like traditions, the nation/state and its developmental ideologies can also be imagined and, by way of extension, there are multiple images of both the “nation” and “development”.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps one of the critical concerns today should be on the *renewed* attention that Mtwara has gained from varied actors both nationally and internationally in the past decade. What has triggered the comeback of Mtwara’s *Cinderella* status? And what does it mean for the individual actors situated in diverse situations of contemporary Mtwara? This constitutes the subject that I now return to.

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<sup>65</sup> For a in-depth analysis on how the state can be imagined, see Förster’s (2012) *Statehood in a Stateless Society. Political Order and Societal Memory in Northern Côte d’Ivoire*.

The arrival of the twenty-first century has witnessed several changes in the Mtwara region in general, and in Mtwara Town in particular. I will highlight a few of the changes and how they have transformed the relational contexts of actions for young people as regards sexuality. But first I should clarify one point in order to avoid falling into the growing tendency to attribute a *determining* role to the ongoing changes when it comes to explaining individuals' social actions leading to culturally or structurally determined actions.

For instance, increasingly, adolescents' sexual and reproductive practices in Mtwara, which for a long time have been explained in relation to the initiation rituals of *jando* and *unyago* (see Harries 1944, Liebenow 1971, Bangser 2010, URT 2011), are now said to be shaped by the ongoing changes (Halley 2012). The latter are said to not only expose young people to the external (modern/global) social and cultural but also weaken the so-called traditional value systems (Halley 2012). To break from the determinist views, two tips should be stressed here: One is that actors constitute the *linchpin* for either reproduction or transformation of their social and cultural settings. Second, the real lifeworld of the actors do not unfold to them in a binary fashion of tradition/local versus modern/global<sup>66</sup>.

## 4.2 Contemporary social transformation

To begin with, the discovery of natural gas at Mnazi Bay on the coast of Mtwara during the year 2000 and indicative presence of oil in the region provoked interests on many sides. According to the final report of the *Tanzania Gas Sector Scoping Mission*, "natural gas reserves at Mnazi Bay are: Proved (1P) 332 bcf, Proved and Probable (2P) 962 bcf and Proved Probable and Possible (3P) 1,542 bcf" (URT 2013:17).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For one thing, it must be emphasized that most of the adolescents in Mtwara today were born less than five years before the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and that they have always inter-subjectively engaged with multiple values and expectations throughout their socialization. This should also apply to many of their parents who have had to manage the co-existence of traditional norms, Islam, Christianity, and modernity since these have been part of the realities in pre-and post colonial Mtwara (see Harries 1944, Gray 1950, Pawlowicz 2009, Helgesson 2006).

<sup>67</sup> bcf is an abbreviation for billion (10<sup>9</sup>) cubic feet, unit used to measure large quantities of gas, approximately equal to 1 trillion (10<sup>12</sup>) Btu. For more information on the measures of natural gas, see <http://www.natgas.info/html/glossary.html>.

What have been transparently obvious following the discoveries include, but are not limited to the revived (in the strict sense of reviving), *flows* of people, images, values, commodities and investments. Apparently, one of the major landmarks in the reinvigoration of interests on Mtwara was the completion of the Mkapa Bridge on the Basin of Rufiji River in 2003 before which the basin could only be navigated with difficulty during the rain seasons. In fact, it took up to six days of travel between Dar es Salaam and Mtwara by road (see also Halley 2012). The bridge was a brain child of the third president of United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin William Mkapa, who also happened to hail from Mtwara.

Whether, he (Mkapa) anticipated the discovery of gas or not is another question but in actual fact the construction of the bridge had started way back during his first term in office in the 1990s. Presumably, it was already indicative in the intermitted exploration of gas reserves in Tanzania, which has been going on over the past fifty years (see URT 2013).<sup>68</sup> What is clear though is that, as head of state, Mkapa was determined to improve the road system, particularly inter-regional roads.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it must be noted here that Mkapa is remembered by many in Tanzania for connecting most regions of the country with tarmac roads, so Mtwara was not exceptional<sup>70</sup>. However, he is also remembered for privatizing most of the state parastatals and for being a champion of Neo-Liberalism in Tanzania<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> In the neighbouring region of Lindi, at Songosongo Island (where I conducted field work for my M.A thesis in 2006), production of gas was already underway in early 2000. Compared to Mnazi Bay in Mtwara, natural gas reserves at Songo Songo are relatively low: Proved (1P) 689 bcf, Proved and Probable (2P) 879 bcf and Proved Probable and Possible (3P) 1,084 bcf (see URT 2013:17).

<sup>69</sup> The operationalization was done under one of the few committed Ministers in Tanzania, Dr John Pombe Magufuli, Minister for Construction and Infrastructural Development. He is the current Minister for Roads and Constructions in Tanzania.

<sup>70</sup> Looking at Mkapa as a social actor in relation to the intricacies of political space in Tanzania, one significant dimension ought to be considered, that is, the successes of top leaders since the 1980s, among other benchmarks, are also measured in terms of what one has done for his homeland (*nyumbani kwao*) apart from the national achievement. Thus, many politicians and bureaucrats alike, often strive to strike the much needed balance.

<sup>71</sup> For an excellent anthropological analysis of the implementation of Neo-Liberal Policies in Tanzania, see Caplan's (2007) *Between Socialism and Neo-Liberalism: Mafia Island, Tanzania, 1965-2004*.

In line with the completion of the Mkapa Bridge, the tarmac road connecting Mtwara and Dar es Salaam has been under construction since the last decade. Until the end of my fieldwork in 2011, less than sixty kilometres remained to complete the entire project. Still, the journey from Dar to Mtwara by road had been reduced to roughly eight hours from the previous six days (see also Halley 2012). In 2010, the Umoja (union) Bridge linking Tanzania and Mozambique through Mtwara was also opened. This also added to linking up the people of Mtwara and Mozambique. One important thing to note here is that for centuries people of Mtwara have crossed to Mozambique across the Ruvuma River in the South, and the Indian Ocean in the East. Their counterparts from Mozambique have also frequented Mtwara via similar routes. During my fieldwork, it was not uncommon to encounter street vendors from Mozambique selling sugar or clothes and shoes.<sup>72</sup> Relatively speaking, the items were cheaper compared to those obtained in Dar es Salaam.<sup>73</sup>

It was also clear to me during my stay that Mtwara Town has a relatively reliable supply of electricity. This was not hard to find out having moved from Dar es Salaam – a city with endemic power supply problems, at least in recent years. In fact, while I could enjoy access to electricity throughout the day, my family, and colleagues in Dar es Salaam were complaining about intermittent blackouts due to power rationing, especially in the dry months from July through to November. Mtwara Town receives its power from the Canadian Artumas Group, which has been processing natural gas from Mnazi Bay since 2005.

According to Obulutsa (2008), the company has already managed to generate 7.5 megawatts of electricity, supplying not only Mtwara Town but also other parts of the region as well as the neighbouring Lindi region. The mission report mentioned earlier underlines that due to limited power demand in the Southern Regions of Lindi and

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<sup>72</sup> On the contemporary borderland interrelationships between youth from Mtwara and some parts of Mozambique, see Helgesson (2006).

<sup>73</sup> As I show in some of the vignettes in chapters six and seven, few adolescent girls have had partners from Mozambique.

Mtwara, very little amount of gas (only 1 million scf/d) from Mnazi Bay field is needed to generate around 11 MW of electricity.<sup>74</sup> However, the reliability of the power supply in town coupled with the presence of several companies involved in the exploration, production and processing of natural gas has attracted a wide range of investments from within and outside Mtwara Town. I should highlight a few of them.

In order to facilitate current and future transportation of wide-ranging goods including gas and probably oil, the deep-water port in the town (built in the 1940s) was renovated and expanded in the year 2010.<sup>75</sup> This was in keeping with the fact that several multinational companies dealing with deep-sea exploration of oil and gas depend on the port for their undertakings. For instance, by September 2012 it was reported that about eight firms from the UK, Brazil, Canada and Norway, among others, were operating in the area (see Tanzania Daily News, 11 September 2012).<sup>76</sup>

The increased flows of people, commodities and capital implied above have also attracted mushrooming business activities in Mtwara Town. Important to consider here is a point that belongs to a different “development” project but has advanced within the same era, that is, the (re)investment in the education sector in Mtwara Town. Along with the discovery of gas, Mtwara Town witnessed a massive increase in the population of students from all over the country. This is especially due to the establishment of Stella Maris Mtwara University College in 2009 (part of the St. Augustine University<sup>77</sup>) and the Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara campus. The two add more than a thousand on to the population of Mtwara Town. Not to mention several other private colleges as well as old educational institutions

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<sup>74</sup> This is probably the reason why the government has decided to transfer the gas to the commercial hub of the country (Dar es Salaam) where the demand for power is extremely high. However, the decision translates to decimating the high expectations of the people of Mtwara and some outsiders who had already speculated on a booming economy in the town and region at large. I personally was frequently approached by friends to secure plots or pieces of land in town. In fact the value of land has skyrocketed. Plots in the prime areas of Mtwara town were sold up to the tune of one billion Tanzanian shillings (about one million USD). To a greater extent, this has resulted in ongoing tension between the government and the people of Mtwara, recently costing several lives in the town.

<sup>75</sup> For an overview of the framework for (re)developing Mtwara port, see JDI (2010) *Tanzania Mtwara Development Corridor: Mtwara port and Economic Development Zone (EDZ) development plan*.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. [http://www.tanzaniaports.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=131&Itemid=290](http://www.tanzaniaports.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=131&Itemid=290)

<sup>77</sup> St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) is the largest private university in Tanzania, owned by the Roman Catholic Church. It was established in 1998 when tertiary education just like other service provision sectors was re-opened for private investment in line with neo-liberal policies. It now has more than ten campuses or constituent colleges spread all over the country.



such as Mtwara Teachers Training College, Tanzania Institute of Accountancy, Mtwara Vocational Training Centre (VETA), Naliendele Agricultural Extension Centre, and several other private and public secondary schools.

Along with the workers and managers of the gas companies and associated ventures, they all compete for housing and other basic goods in the small coastal town of Mtwara. Thus, the people of Mtwara actively adjust to tapping opportunities just as they did during the Groundnut scheme in the 1940s and 50s (as discussed earlier). Some let parts of their houses to students and staff working for the companies and institutions. Some start up businesses, others seek employment in the companies and education institutions.

### ***Livelihood sources***

Certainly Mtwara Town is booming, if not buzzing in many respects. There are countless shops, vending stores, hairdressing saloons, restaurants, bars, fastfood stops, mini-supermarkets and evening markets, stationeries and internet cafés, among others. So much construction is going on all over the town. However, fishing and farming activities are still important for the livelihood of many people in Mtwara Town (see also NBS and Macro 2010, Halley 2012, Bangser 2010). Apparently, people diversify their source of income, which means that new economic opportunities do not necessarily erode the seemingly traditional ones.

Fishing and farming constitute the major sources of income for almost half of the families. Traditionally, for example, the Maraba who constitute the majority inhabitants of Mtwara Town are known for their engagement in fishing (see Liebenow 1971). But contemporary Mtwara is witnessing increased people's involvement in business, official employment and casual labour. It was also reported in my conversations with parents that some of the male parents spend up to three months away from home in search of income.

Furthermore, while cultural values have traditionally ordained men as breadwinners to provide for their wives and children, women (and at times children) are increasingly supporting households with their engagement in petty businesses and community micro

credit groups (see URT 2011). This is regardless of whether they are married or living as single parents. Equally, there are also cases where male parents complain about wives taking advantage of not spending their own money on household needs just because they (the women) are not breadwinners. Thus, dynamics in the households entail individual actors' responsive engagements with their social situations not limited to prescribed roles.

### ***Transportation/physical mobility***

As explained above, it is possible today to travel between Mtwara Town and Dar es Salaam either by land or by air. Several buses run daily between Dar es Salaam and Mtwara. During my fieldwork there were two flights from Dar es Salaam to Mtwara Town on a daily basis except on Sundays when only one flight was available. They were operated by private companies namely, Precision Air and Fly 540. Mtwara Airport is located four kilometres from the town centre and has recently been renovated. Taxis operate between the airport and town, mainly at the time of incoming flights. Mtwara Town is also connected to other parts of the region (being the regional capital) as well as neighbouring regions. As such, several (mini)buses run between Mtwara, Masasi and Lindi. These leave when full, and take a few hours only. Other buses operate between Mtwara and Newala. I have also observed people travelling with trucks/lorries from Mtwara Town to Mtwara rural, Nanyumbu and Tandahimba. Equally, some people frequently or occasionally sail between Mtwara Town and Mozambique (cf. Helgesson 2006).

Mobility within Mtwara Town is possible by various means of transport. Whereas few people rely on private cars, motorbikes and bicycles, most people use public transport. The latter include *pikipiki/bodaboda* (motorbikes), *bajaji* (tricycles), *daladala* (commuters) and taxis. While *daladala* is preferred for relatively long routes, also due to the low fare they charge, *bodaboda* and *bajaji* are preferred because of their ability to get to places beyond the reach of the *daladala*. In addition, unlike *daladala* which often do not leave the station before they are full, *bajaji* and *bodaboda* leave instantly when they get passengers. What one also observes in Mtwara is that many people have phone numbers for regular *bajaji* or *bodaboda*, so that they simply call to get picked up. Among other

reasons, this explains the predominant use of *bodaboda*, for example, despite their regular involvement in road accidents. How the dynamics inherent in the transport system in Mtwara Town open (social) spaces for adolescents' sexual encounters is the addressed in chapters eight and nine of the current study.

### ***Information communication practices***

Just like in other urban settings in Tanzania and elsewhere in the world, Mtwara Town has witnessed radical transformation in the realms of information communication technology since the late 1990s (see Ling and Campbell 2009). What ought to be pointed out, however, is that Mtwara Town also had its own print media prior to independence. I am specifically referring to the town's newspaper known as *Hekanelo*, a Makonde word for "laugh today", *cheka leo* in Swahili (URT 2011: 27). Then, with independence came *Redio Tanzania Dar es Salaam* (RTD), the oldest state run radio station under the Tanzania Broadcasting Company (TBC). With the implementation of liberalization policies in Tanzania, private radio stations were established in Mtwara, especially during the second half of the last decade. There were four radio stations by 2012. These include: a Catholic church owned Redio Maria, Pride FM, INFO Radio and SAFARI Radio. The latter was established during the first phase of my fieldwork.

Although there is no television station based in Mtwara, the town enjoys accessibility to virtually all the country's main TV channels. Equally important has been the revolution of mobile phones since the 1990s. From the monopoly of the state-owned Tanzania Telecommunication Company Limited (TTCL) one now has the situation where all five major mobile phone companies in Tanzania provide services in Mtwara Town. These include Vodacom, Tigo, Airtel, Zantel and TTCL (see URT 2011). Just to put this in a perspective, The World Bank (2013) estimates show that in Tanzania, mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) has increased by more than twenty per cent from 31 to 56 in 2008 and 2011, respectively.

Apart from mobile phones, print media in form of newspapers and magazines arrive in Mtwara Town from Dar es Salaam on a daily basis, at times via the morning flights but often by bus arriving in the afternoon. Finally, it was not until 2004 when one could access the

Internet in Mtwara Town. This was pioneered by a private company called Makondenet and TTCL Company. Like in many towns in Tanzania, works to lay down optic fibres were underway in Mtwara Town during my fieldwork. The idea is to connect the country under what is called *Mkongo wa Taifa*. In chapters eight and nine, I demonstrate how different forms of media provide space for adolescents in the context of their sexual lives.

### ***Accommodation services, leisure places and spaces***

From the time I commenced my fieldwork in Mtwara Town in 2010 until its completion early 2013, several new hotels, lodges, hostels, guesthouses, apartments and private houses have been built in town. This signals the pressing demand for accommodation and housing, following the increased flow of people into Mtwara Town. As a corollary, the town has also witnessed a mushrooming of leisure places and spaces. These are not limited to a few bars, restaurants and disco/nightclubs. Figures from a reliable source at the Mtwara Municipal Council indicate that by 2011 there were about eighty-two bars, six Hotels, and sixty-two guesthouses/lodges. Apparently, the number must have been on the increase, given the promising business in the realm of accommodation. Especially for bars, the figures may not be representative of the situation because many of them go unregistered, not just in Mtwara but elsewhere in Tanzania too. Quite often, space for a shop or kiosk during the day becomes a grocery/bar in the evening or at night. Most of the hotels and lodges/guesthouses also operate a (mini) bar and restaurant.

I should emphasize one point about the disco/nightclubs here because of their significance in our understanding of some of the sexual practices discussed in the subsequent chapters. The state of nightlife in Mtwara Town is increasingly changing both in terms of the number and quality of the nightclubs available. New and sophisticated nightclubs have been established. When I started my fieldwork, Litingi was one of the popular clubbing sites in Mtwara Town, along with Msijute social hall. The two are located several kilometres from the town centre. When Makonde Beach Club was established in 2011, with its location within the town around Shangani area, the two clubs significantly lost attraction. This became clear in terms of the limited frequency that disco shows and other performances were hosted. Almost on bi-weekly bases, a popular music star would arrive from Dar es Salaam to perform at the Makonde Beach Club. In 2012, however, Maisha Club Mtwara, another new and more

sophisticated night club (with a VIP section) was established. This increased the number of show days per week, not limited to Fridays and weekends.

There are also disco clubs highly frequented by teenagers partly due to the low entry fee compared to Makonde Beach Club or Maisha Club Mtwara. Ushirika Club is one of them, operating almost every weekend. Others included Blantyre and Chiko but they have ceased operation. It must be noted, however, that teenagers also frequent the sophisticated clubs as long as they can manage to mobilize the entry fee and associated clubbing costs. In the times that I participated in the night life of Mtwara Town, especially in the nightclubs, it was clear to me that individuals of all walks of life frequented these leisure places/spaces. However, as far as the most popular clubs (Makonde Beach and Maisha Club Mtwara) are concerned, college students constituted the majority audience, but in Ushirika, Chiko and Blantyre, adolescents were in the majority.

There were also cases where I observed many adult couples at *taarabu* group performances. *Taarabu* is a music genre associated with the coastal communities of the Indian Ocean (*muziki wa mwambao*). Apparently not many teenagers were into *taarabu* compared to *Bongo fleva* (a music genre for the “new generation”). I will return to the role of *Bongo fleva* as regards sexuality in Tanzania in chapter eight. There is also the Bandari Club (owned by the Mtwara Port Authority), which is known for hosting live performances of jazz music by a group called *Bokaboka*. Here many of the participants are adults except when the club is hired, for example, by college students for a graduation ceremony.

Another important observation was that in all nightclubs, there is a bar and some have both a bar and a restaurant. Apart from dancing, visitors to the clubs enjoy drinks, engaging in private conversation and similar encounters. Incidents of fighting were not uncommon. Finally, I should highlight that the nightclubs were also used for other social events such as weddings, graduation ceremonies and birthday parties. I will return to this point later.



Plate 4.2 Clubbing at Makonde beach club

©Sambaiga 2011

### *Trends in education and health services*

Several reasons have attracted the attention of different actors when it comes to adolescent sexuality in Mtwara, and Tanzania at large. For the sake of this study, I should highlight three interrelated points: the need to keep adolescents in schools, the “problem” of teenage pregnancy and the urgent need to protect adolescents from HIV infections. The three issues are articulated in varied policy guidelines and strategies as well as programme interventions related to adolescent sexual and reproductive health. In effect, different actors have been working in the Mtwara region with the aim of making a difference with regard to the mentioned dimensions of adolescents’ lives. In what follows I briefly highlight some the efforts and achievements so far.

### *Education programmes*

Apparently, many adolescents in Mtwara come of age while schooling. The compilation of education statistics for the Mtwara region from the perspective of what has been achieved since independence, the regional authority found several quantitative changes in the education sector as summarized in the table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Achievements in the education sector from 1961-2011

Parameter	1961-1996	1997-2011	Achievement	Percent (%)
Nursery schools	117	562	445	480
Primary schools	493	626	133	27
Ordinary secondary schools	13	137	124	95
Advanced secondary schools	1	9	8	800
Enrolments in primary schools	141,167	244,240	103,073	73
Enrolments in ordinary secondary schools	4,305	42,965	38,660	896

Source: URT (2011)

The above table shows that there has been a tremendous quantitative change both in terms of the number of education institutions and the young people enrolled in the latter. One of the major social imaginaries behind these efforts is *elimu ni ufunguo wa maisha* (education is the key to better life). Another one is that *vijana ni taifa la kesho*, meaning young people constitute the future of nation.<sup>78</sup> In fact, the above figures are reflective of the national success story as recounted in one of the most recent UNICEF (2011) studies on adolescence in Tanzania. In particular the study highlights that,

“(...) a significant increase in enrolment at primary level (7-13 years): from 59 per cent in 2000 to more than 95 per cent in 2010. (...) net secondary enrolment (14-19 years) has also expanded quickly: from six per cent in 2002 to over 30 per cent in 2010” (UNICEF 2011:22).

To allow for a discussion about the extent to which adolescents, parents and other actors share similar imaginations about education and life, it is important to juxtapose the above figures with trends in school dropouts and qualitative changes pertaining to the education sector. It has been reported that only eighty per cent of the students enrolled in primary school manage to complete primary education (see URT 2010a, UNICEF 2011). In her analysis of the trend in the primary education sector in Mtwara, Swantz (1996: 19) contends that “by the year 1996 the numbers (of students) attending school had started to

<sup>78</sup> Increasingly young people are contesting against the notion of being the future of the nation by advancing that they are part of the present nation (*taifa la leo*) and would like to partake in today’s fruits of the nation. This has come in response to the tendency of the older generation in power to sideline youth from participating in top level politics (see Stroeken 2008).

dwindle and truancy was rampant.” In this case, boys and girls dropping school are framed as *truants*, which means they were causing trouble to the system (the structure). According to Swantz (1996) one of “the reasons given for the girls’ leaving school is early marriage.”



Plate 4.3: Secondary school students in Mtwara Town

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As for ordinary secondary school, studies have confirmed that more girls than boys drop out (URT 2010a, UNICEF 2011). In Mtwara region, for example, data obtained from the regional education authority revealed that since 2007 to June this year (2011) a total number of 1,291 schoolgirls from both primary and secondary schools became pregnant. This is an average of 323 girls per year (for national figures, see URT 2010a). Before I return to the “problem of teenage pregnancy”, let me enquire into the qualitative aspect of schooling.



Very briefly, concerns have been voiced as regards the quality of primary and secondary education provided to adolescents. One of the parameters has been the performance of the respective adolescents in their final examination. Nation-wide surveys indicate that less than fifty per cent of students passed their primary school final examination in 2010. Apparently Mtwara region performed better compared to Western regions. But, the Population Council's analysis of DHS data for Tanzania (2004/05) shows that thirty-six per cent of female adolescents (15-19 years) were unable to read a sentence (see Bangser 2010, UNICEF 2011). Perhaps the big question is what does it mean for adolescents to fail their primary and secondary education, especially in relation to whether or not they relate such an experience to the imaginary of a better life (*maisha mazuri/bora*). Is it simply the end of their education hope (UNICEF 2011), or the acceleration toward poverty? Do they share the experts' imagination of a better future and how to get it? What kind of social spaces are opened up by the process of schooling? These are some of the questions that I explore in the next chapters.

### **4.3 Sexual and reproductive health issues**

#### ***The teenage pregnancy "problem"***

It has been potently argued that the above efforts to keep adolescents in school have to a large extent contributed to the construction of the teenage pregnancy "problem" by prolonging the period of adolescence (see Chambua et al. 1994, Macleod 2011). According to earlier studies among the Makonde of Mtwara, girls often got married upon concluding the initiation rituals (Harries 1944, Liebenow 1971). Specifically, Harries (1944) stresses that it was only risky to get pregnant prior to initiation. With the current situation where most of adolescents are expected to be in school until their eighteenth or twentieth year, pregnancy becomes a "problem".

In the specific terms of the dominant development and health discourses, pregnancy is considered to impede girls from education and a better future (see for example URT 2006, UN 1995, UNICEF 2011, Bearinger et al. 2007). Equally, teenage pregnancy is said to contribute a greater share of induced abortion and maternal mortality, hence hampering the achievement of national and international targets such as the Millennium

Development Goals (Bearinger et al. 2007, UNICEF 2011). Just to situate these discourses in perspective, I should reiterate that it was the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, which earmarked adolescents as a special category to be targeted by SRH policies and programmes (see UN 1995, Obrist van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997, Richey 2008, Corr  a 1997). Since then, the adolescents' sexual and reproductive practices have been at the top of the national and international agenda. In Tanzania, for example, several policy guidelines have been instituted, including the National Policy Guidelines on Reproductive and Child Health (2003) the National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy (2004-2008) Standards for Adolescent-Friendly Reproductive Health Services (2005) Challenges on Adolescent Health and Development, an Advocacy Guide (2006), and the National Adolescent Reproductive Health Strategy (2010-2015).

In short, teenage pregnancy is normatively approached as a “problem” by mainstream SRH policy and research so that the complexities or details of actions taken by the individual adolescents are hardly examined. Studies have shown that Mtwara is among the regions with the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the country (36% and 26% in 2005 and 2010 respectively (see TDHS 2004/05, 2010).<sup>79</sup> It has therefore attracted the attention of many sexual and reproductive health interventions (this was the main reason for our research project to select Mtwara). Bangser (2010), for example, has disclosed that despite being framed as a marginalized (isolated) region, Mtwara has witnessed several SRH programmes implemented by diverse national and international agencies. To mention but a few: PASHA, Stadi za Maisha, MAISHA, EGPAF, Ujana/ISHI, Marie Stopes, Fataki, UNICEF, TGSPH, INSIST, MEDA, Sexual coercion study, UMATI, WAMA, EngenderHealth, Clinton Foundation, ActionAid, AMREF, Basic Needs, BMAF, and DHIP.

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<sup>79</sup> Mtwara town has maintained the national average figure of 15% rate of teenage pregnancy for urban areas in Tanzania (see NBS and ORC Macro 2005; NBS and ICF Macro 2011). The 10% decline is said to be a result of declining proportion of adolescent girls who are married and a significant increase in the use of contraceptives among sexually active adolescents (UNICEF 2011: 12). However, as Jonhson-Hanks (2007) argues, it is erroneous to reduce young women's intentions to mere statistical computations, rather more, a lot needs to be done to understand their actions.

The link between the school dropout ratio and teenage pregnancy in Tanzania makes sense when explained in the context of the *implicit* policy that girls should be expelled from school when they get pregnant. This is precisely what happens in practice at least until recently despite the fact that there is no official policy that prevents girls to be re-admitted to school after giving birth.<sup>80</sup> In 2010, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training issued a guideline to clarify a school's responsibility towards girls who get pregnant while schooling. Among other things, the guideline spells out that a girl may still be expelled as soon as her pregnancy status is revealed, on the basis that her presence in classroom could be disruptive and set a bad example to fellow students (see UNICEF 2011). According to the secular, the expelled girl can be readmitted after giving birth.

How parents respond to teenage pregnancy and the manner in which such responses, along with policy articulation, are taken up by individual adolescents both prior to and after getting pregnant are among the pertinent subjects I address in chapters five through to eight.<sup>81</sup> This is critical in our effort to deepen understanding of teenage pregnancy in Mtwara beyond the structural-poverty (Bangser 2010, UNICEF 2011, Halley 2012) and cultural-*unyango* (Mushi et al. 2007, UNICEF 2008, Regional Committee on School Pregnancy 2007) deterministic discourses.

As noted earlier, induced abortion among adolescents is one of the issues that concerns experts in the field of SRH. In Tanzania, for example, both non-ethnographic and ethnographic studies have shown that abortion is widely practised despite being illegal and associated with serious health implications (see Mpangalile et al. 1993, Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001, Plummer et al. 2008, UNICEF 2011).<sup>82</sup> Given the fear of cultural disapproval, legal<sup>83</sup> and religious sanctions, secrecy and silence are common place in

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<sup>80</sup> It must, however, be noted that school by-laws in Tanzania do not allow students to engage in any sexual activities, with the consequence that transgression of the rule often leads to expulsion.

<sup>81</sup> Rather than assuming that all teenage pregnancy are undesirable, I explore from the actors' viewpoints as to when pregnancy is a problem and when it is not, and how it is dealt with when unwanted.

<sup>82</sup> For an overview of the situation of abortion in sub-Saharan Africa see Barreto et al. (1992), and for a global perspective see Bearinger et al. (2007).

<sup>83</sup> Induced abortion in Tanzania is punishable by fourteen years in jail for the practitioner administering the abortion, seven years for the woman in question, and three years for whoever is implicated to have assisted the procedure (see Plummer et al. 2008).

induced abortions. This has culminated to the current situation whereby it is difficult to arrive at sound estimates of the gravity of induced abortions, especially when this is coupled with the methodological limits of surveys (Barreto et al. 1992, Plummer et al. 2008).

In Mtwara, for example, abortions are reported to be high, based on anecdotal reports from post-abortion treatments of those who happen to visit health facilities (see Bangser 2010). Adolescents, particularly secondary school girls, are said to contribute the lion's share of induced abortions in Mtwara.<sup>84</sup> Given the social and cultural disapproval of adolescent sexuality and reproduction, which often contradict with adolescents' multiple aspirations, induced abortion provides a space for protecting, enhancing or regaining valued forms of social respectability. This allows for explaining induced abortion and related reproductive practices beyond the rationalistic views that adolescents induce abortion simply because they lack knowledge about the risks associated with the procedure.

### ***Adolescents and HIV/AIDS***

Available data suggests that the rate of HIV infection in Mtwara region has increased from 3.6 per cent in 2008 to 4.1 percent in 2012 (TACAIDS 2008, 2012). This is in contrast to the national trend whereby the prevalence rate decreased from 5.7 to 5.1 per cent between 2008 and 2012 (TACAIDS 2008, 2012). As a reflection that adolescents were not co-opted into the so-called risk groups until the 1990s when most of the standards for HIV interventions were set, data on the prevalence of HIV and AIDS among adolescents aged ten to nineteen years in Tanzania is not available (see UNICEF 2011). This in no way means that there have been no efforts to aggregate statistical data to indicate the prevalence of the epidemic among adolescents (see, for example, the HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey of 2007/8, 2012). Unanimously, different experts in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Tanzania and elsewhere agree that adolescents constitute the "vulnerable" and "most at risk" group.

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<sup>84</sup>UNICEF (2011: 28) hints to the connection between lower pregnancy rates in Dar es Salaam (15% which is the same as that of Mtwara urban) and greater knowledge and access to contraception along with access to illegal abortion.

The framing is not only articulated by actors in the long list of the organizations working on SRH in Mtwara, as outlined earlier, but also in the global development and health discourse. Geared towards “worldwide aspirations for the healthy development of adolescents” (Bearinger et al. 2007: 1229), the global discourse about adolescent sexual and reproductive health is often accompanied by statistics that help to legitimize interventions in the lives of young people.<sup>85</sup> The figures are also used to attract funding from donors and support from policy makers.

The big question, however, is to what extent such framings are in line with the understandings of individual adolescents and their immediate others? In chapters seven and eight of this thesis, I grapple with two aspects of the question, namely, does HIV/AIDs constitute a risk in the adolescents’ horizons of hope and fears, and how do individual adolescents engage with the experts’ HIV/AIDS narratives?

#### **4.4 Summary**

In many ways the history and contemporary social transformations in Mtwara Town as well as the region at large are quite telling with regard to national and global dynamics. Apparently the ongoing mounting *flows* of people, values, images, investments and narratives are not new to many parts of the coastal town of Mtwara. Urbanism and global connections are not hard to spot in the historical and archeological evidences on Mtwara. Whereas the pace, gravity and dynamics of urbanization and globalization seem to have taken on different forms, individuals and groups have always participated in the processes in myriad and meaningful ways<sup>86</sup>. Appropriation has been at work irrespective of the form of the encounters – trade, Islam, Christianity, developmentalist projects as well as global consumerism and discourses. In effect, social actions such as adolescent sexual activities are not only diverse, but also multifaceted. Arriving at a nuanced

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<sup>85</sup> Vance 1991 characterizes most of these studies as organized in a situation of need for rapid data to allow quick fixes. Hence, Vance contends, the studies prefer the collection of easily measured behavioural data that are easily quantifiable. This is often done within the popular approach of measuring knowledge, attitude and perceptions (KAPs) where the tendency is to count acts rather than explore meaning and contexts of sexual activities.

<sup>86</sup> For a critical reflection on urbanity in Africa, see Förster’s (2013b) *On Urbanity: Creativity and Emancipation in African Urban Life*.

contextualization of individual and collective social practices in settings like Mtwara Town, perspectives that go beyond sheer dichotomies are highly called for.<sup>87</sup> It is within this context therefore that this study pays more attention to the lived experiences of actors (see chapters five through to eight).

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<sup>87</sup> Joas has convincingly underlined that understanding of what is action sheds light on what social order is and how social change is possible (Joas 1996).

## 5. SEXUAL INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

The purpose of this chapter is to situate adolescent sexual practices in their relational contexts. This is important because sexual relationships, be they premarital, marital or extra marital, are deeply embedded in other forms of social relationships (see Jackson 2007). Thus the main contention that I seek to defend is that, regardless of the form of their sexual relationships, adolescents engage with multiple social expectations, along with their own varied aspirations. The sets of expectations and aspirations and their constitutive overlapping sexual subjectivity<sup>88</sup>, I argue, are central to our understanding of how and why adolescents orient their actions in particular ways in the course of enacting their sexual practices. The argument, I claim, points to the neglected dimension of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, namely social well-being.<sup>89</sup> The latter entails a positive state of being or lived experience attained through the synchronized satisfaction of personal, relational and collective aspirations (Veenhoven 2008, Mathews and Izquierdo 2009).<sup>90</sup>

In what follows I provide an account of different forms of social respectability related to adolescent sexual and reproductive practices in Mtwara Town. A closer examination of the parental and peer expectations shows how the normative attributes attached to premarital sexual activities diverge and converge in terms of the socially prescribed rewards and sanctions. Major attention is drawn on the shared or joint actions that result from actors' awareness of their subjective positions and how they strive to fit into the lives of others as a pre-requisite for social well-being.

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<sup>88</sup> For a reflection on the "everydayness" of sexuality, see Stevi Jackson's (2007) *The Sexual Self in Late Modernity*.

<sup>89</sup> For the most recent anthropological perspectives on well-being, see Mathews and Izquierdo's (2009) edited volume *Pursuits of Happiness: Well-Being in Anthropological Perspective*.

<sup>90</sup> On the notion of well-being from a sociological perspective, see Veenhoven's (2008) *Sociological Theories of Subjective Well-being*.

## 5.1 Social respectability and premarital adolescent sexuality



Plate 5.1: An adolescent with her child, mother and neighbour

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Beyond the reductionist and unfashionable ‘African Sexuality’ thesis (Caldwell et al. 1989), it is widely espoused that there is a concern with the control of sexuality embedded in what has come to be known as “respect cultures”<sup>91</sup> in East Africa (Heald 1995, Ahlberg 1994). In Tanzania this is well attested in studies of adolescent sexuality (see, for example, Liljeström et al. 1998, Wight et al. 2006, van Reeuwijk 2010). As I depict below, Mtwara is not exempted from the preoccupation with the control of sexuality in relation to the “respect package” (see Harries 1944, Halley 2012). Nevertheless, the most endemic caveat in many attempts to analyse social respectability is the tendency to see respectability as a unidimensional phenomenon, and, in extension, to favour the hegemonic constructs or prescriptions. Since individuals belong to multiple

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<sup>91</sup> It is provided that social order in most East African societies is conceived to be grounded in respect. The latter entails articulations of “difference, attention to proper decorum and, above all, self-restraint”. Consequently, a good person is considered to be “one who has respect” (Heald 1995: 493).



social groups (van Binsbergen 2007), it is argued that social respectability ought to be approached as a multidimensional social formation.

The quest for multiple forms of social reputation is among the key concerns in premarital sexual practices in Mtwara Town, as elsewhere in Tanzania (see Wight et al. 2006). Compared to their parents, adolescents coming of age today are confronted with a wide-range of sexual scripts. No matter how much they embrace diverse sexual values cherished by their peers within and beyond their localities, most adolescents constantly observe (at least in one way or the other) what is expected of them by their parents, communities and society at large. A closer examination of the parental and peer expectations in the present study shows that the normative attributes attached to premarital sexual activities diverge and converge in terms of the socially prescribed rewards and sanctions; this substantially accounts for the overlapping sexual subjectivity.

## **5.2 Overlapping premarital sexual subjectivity**

The lived premarital sexual and reproductive experiences manifest a web of social and cultural ties into which adolescents are bound. Furthermore, a thorough analysis of the everyday life-ways of adolescents in Mtwara Town shows that these young people engage with diverse relational contexts. The latter induce multiple aspirations in the lives of adolescents. In relation to sexuality, one of the crucial dimensions of the adolescents' practices of the everyday life, the aspirations are not limited to sexual desires, pleasure and affection. They also entail social and material gains that add to the individual adolescent's notions of social well-being. Other elements of the latter include what Bourdieu (1998) has called "symbolic capital". It entails the sense of social respectability (*kuheshimika*), social worth (*mtu wa maana*), social reputation (*hadhi*) and social acceptance (*kukubalika*).

In the statistical data from the survey of 500 girls living in a variety of households across Mtwara Town (as described earlier in the methodological chapter), one of the striking findings was that majority of the girls (ninety seven per cent) reported that they were striving for *kuheshimika* (a good social reputation) in their communities as regards sexual

activities. The girls within the age category of fifteen to nineteen also felt accepted in their communities. Importantly, the claims for a positive self-representation converged across the girls' reproductive status (see table 5.1).

*Table 5.1: Claims of self-representations*

Responses	Started child bearing (n=76)		Not started child bearing (n=424)		Total N=500	
	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
Strive for good reputation	76	100	410	97	486	97
Feel accepted	64	84	377	92	441	88

The above findings suggest the presence of specific sexual and reproductive scripts that are socially and culturally sanctioned or accepted. However, what is obscured in the statistical data is the heterogeneity in the forms of social reputation and acceptance. This hints to the methodological limits of quantitative approaches, which are unfortunately dominant in the studies about adolescent sexuality and reproduction. I arrived at the nuanced understanding of the multiplicity in the positions of *social worth* in relation to premarital sexuality, following an extended ethnographic fieldwork as discussed in the chapter four.

In theoretical terms, feeling accepted or striving for a good reputation implies that as a social actor, an adolescent makes self-reflections on his or her own practices in relation to the normative discourses in the respective social environment. It also indicates that young people are aware of what is expected of them and can perform towards meeting both their personal aspirations and desires, along with societal values. Thus, it is this ability to shift between, and to integrate, multiple subjectivity that allows adolescents to participate in the lives of their families and communities while at the same time “fitting into” the lives of their peers.

Unfortunately, a greater part of the available literature on sexual and reproductive lives of adolescents in Tanzania rarely touches upon the subjective dimensions of social well-

being. Whenever they do so, the tendency is to privilege the perspectives of parents and experts at the expense of the peers' standpoints. The latter is usually relegated to the realms of seemingly dangerous and misinformed "peer pressures" or "youth cultures" (see for example, Wight et al. 2006, Rweyemamu 2007). Accordingly, the peers' perspectives are seen as threatening the well-being, not only of the young people but also of society at large. Contrastingly, I set out to make a corrective argument in relation to the dominant understanding of the subject at issue.

The fundamental point with respect to the central argument of my thesis is that both the markers and dimensions of social well-being, such as social reputation or worth, are multiple, flexible and contested. Thus, it is in the interest of the actors to temporarily (dis)locate attentions in relation to the desired state of well-being as they deal with their respective (problematic) life situations. Exploring the manner in which adolescents go about the mentioned complexities in their daily practices is the subject to which I now turn.

### **5.3 Parents' expectations**

From the perspective of many parents in Mtwara Town, an adolescent who restrains herself or himself from premarital sexual activities is taken to be both dutiful (*ametulia*) and well mannered (*ana tabia nzuri*). Additionally, the adolescent is also rewarded with the status of having respect (*anaheshima*). The parental expectations are higher towards girls than boys. Thus, adolescent sexual practices are not only disapproved of but also sanctioned by verbal warnings – *kugombezwa* or *kugomea* as they say in Mtwara Town – and punishments (*adhabu*) which can be physical (*kuchapwa/kupigwa*) or/and non-physical such as denial of parental care and support (*kususiwa*).

The worst part of it, according to most of my informants, would be dishonour (*kudharauliwa*) and loss of social worth (*hafai/hana maana*). Adolescents in such situations are referred to as spoiled (*ameharibika/ameshindikana*). In extreme cases, parents would either utter a curse (*laana*) or disown (*kufukuza*) the adolescent, or both. The critical question here is why and how do parents develop and sustain the mentioned

subjectivity towards premarital sexuality. Apparently, historical and empirical realities suggest sound explanations to the question at hand.

Harking back to their past, both the parental generation and the elderly men and women in Mtwara Town recount that *bikra* (virginity) was central to the consummation of marriage. *Harusi* literally means wedding but in this context it refers to a testimony of virginity, a practice that made virginity more valuable. This is because the presence of *harusi* symbolized not only the ability of the girl to discipline and contain her sexual desires, but also the proper parental control. Both the girl and her parents were rewarded with many material gifts and, more importantly, with respect and social worth (see also Harries 1944, Halley 2012).

On the other hand, the absence of *harusi* meant that the girl was spoiled and poorly mannered. Consequently, both the girl and her parents received fewer gifts but more shame and disgrace instead. It is thus arguable that premarital sexual practices were also part of the past of the parental generation in Mtwara Town, only that the degree and the ways of enactment or staging the practices seem to have taken on different forms today.

Basically, virginity was enforced and protected by attaching shame, disgrace and poor family control on the lack of *harusi* at marriage. In that respect, parents and grandparents invested more effort into regulating and controlling pre-marital sex among girls to ensure their social well-being. How they went about it entailed various modes of sanctions, restrictions, intimidations, and the regular testing of virginity. Discussions with female parents in Mtwara Town revealed that grandparents, for example, would test the virginity (*kukagua*) of a granddaughter by pushing a finger into the girl's vagina whenever the girl came home at times when she was allowed to go outside the household, that is, to school, to fetch water or/and firewood. In addition, adolescent girls were also threatened that if they engaged in sexual intercourse, their mothers would pass away (*mama yako atakufa*), or the girls' stomach would burst (*utapasuka tumbo*).

Unanimously, parents acknowledge that it is impossible to enact similar practices today because the adolescents would not comply and, by extension, the parent in question would be risking to be reported to the police or labelled a witch (*kuitwa mchawi*). As for the intimidations, they admit that adolescents today are more knowledgeable and informed than their parents. They attribute the changes to schooling, exposure to mass media and interactions with other people from different cultures.

Yet, the above does not mean that adolescents completely ignore everything about such “traditional” practices. For instance, *harusi* is still testified in a few marriage ceremonies, meaning that in these cases the girls had managed to retain their virginity in different ways. Although others would abstain from vaginal sex and resort to other sexual practices, there are also those who faked virginity. Thus, adolescents still face some sort of struggle to avoid shame and disgrace falling on them and their parents.

What is also indicative in the changes, however, is a kind of societal creativity, whereby social reputation and respect may not be placed on *harusi* but on the number of people<sup>92</sup> one succeeds to attract to a wedding ceremony (*shughuli*). The amount of money and other gifts received through *kufupa*, a practice where gifts are given to the bride and the mother constitutes another attribute of reputation. Female parents in particular are more active in *kufupa* because they are often members in several women self-help groups or networks. In such networks one is obliged to contribute a fixed or unfixed amount whenever a member has a *shughuli*.<sup>93</sup> These parents always look forward to the moment of garnering gifts. In most cases the total collection ranges between several hundred thousands and a few millions TZS (that is, hundreds or thousands of dollars). More fame can be gained if the invitees can eat and drink to their satisfaction.

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<sup>92</sup> Their statuses would even be higher as people would talk about how many cars and which brands were parked outside the the respective household or public hall.

<sup>93</sup> *Shughuli* is not limited to wedding ceremonies but includes *kuharua* (initiation ceremonies), birthday parties, *arobaini* (social event to mark fourty days after the death of a person) and *maulidi* (social event especially celebrations with or without religious prayers but in strict sense of the term as used in Islam, Maulidi (Mawlid) referes to the birthday celebrations of the Prophet or historical religious figure).

Just like in other towns and cities in Tanzania, wedding ceremonies are increasingly gaining popularity in Mtwara as sites to showcase family statuses. The latter are displayed through consumerism inscribed in the type and costs of *ukumbi* (hall), food and drinks served and the sophistication of costumes, cars and technicalities such as the presence of a high-tech camera team and public speaking. Famous wedding halls in Mtwara Town include Makonde Beach Club, Safari Club, Msemu Hotel and Msijute Beach Resort. In such settings, parents glean reputation even if the bride is in her last few weeks of premarital pregnancy.

Yet still, based on the understanding that the adolescents are still minors and immature, it is common for parents in Mtwara Town and many other parts of Tanzania to invest efforts in controlling the social interactions that adolescents engage in, especially girls. A very restrictive parent is referred to by the adolescents as strict (*mkali*). In extreme cases such a parent is referred to as a colonial master (*mkoloni*), mimicking both the strictness and power of the colonial regime to control their spheres of influence. From the perspective of peers, a girl whose parents (could also be one of them) are very restrictive, acquires the status of being a child from a household with very strict rules commonly known as *mtoto wa geti kali*, literally meaning a child of a strong gate. These expressions point to the important fact that the degree of parental restrictions varies across households, as depicted in different portraits in chapter seven.

In addition, particularly adolescents who are still in schooling, either in primary or secondary school or college, along with those are waiting to pursue further education, are expected to perform better in studies so as to prepare for a better future. The basis for such an aspiration is grounded in the social imaginary *elimu ni ufunguo wa maisha*, meaning that education is a key to better life. It is therefore in the interest of many parents to keep adolescents in schools. Parents were also eager to spend their limited resources on supporting their sons' and daughters' education. This involved, as I observed in many households, that boys and girls are allowed to attend extra classes after normal school hours, commonly known as tuition. Accordingly this adds to the worries of parents that by engaging in sexual activities adolescents would not concentrate at school.

Additionally, girls could get pregnant, while boys could face charges for impregnating a girl. This of course mirrors the fact that girls are expelled from school once they get pregnant and, by extension, state law criminalizes the man responsible for the pregnancy.

There is also the other side of parents to try their best to discipline their sons and daughters as a form of social and moral obligation and foster the understanding that their conduct falls back on the parents' social reputation. Here, parents draw heavily from traditional and religious discourses against premarital sexuality. Both in Islamic<sup>94</sup> and Christian religious teachings, premarital sexuality is sinful (*dhambi*) and strongly prohibited. Adolescents have a clear understanding of the religious teachings, and it was also clear in their expression "they prohibit (*wanakataza*)" in their response to my question about what do the teachings say about premarital sexuality.

How then can parents cope with the tension between the ideals of premarital (non)sexuality and its practice? What came out clearly in the present study is that parents attribute to the ongoing macro social forces beyond their own spheres of influence (household) the adolescents' failure to reproduce the valued adolescence as "lived" by the parents in the past (nostalgic articulations). In particular, they highlight *shule* (schooling) and *maendeleo* (development) as among the key factors for *kuharibu watoto* (spoiling the children). For *maendeleo* they point to *utandawazi* (globalization) as one of the catalysts spoiling children and fostering moral decay. Therefore, despite the fact that education is increasingly seen as a means to a better life, parents are nonetheless acknowledging that when coupled with the "temptations" of *utandawazi* the probability for the adolescents to succeed in school becomes low.

#### **5.4 Losing and regaining social respect from parents**

One of the fundamental characteristic of the forms of social respectability and worth is that they can be gained, lost and regained by social actors. This is evident in the lived experiences of adolescents in relation to proscriptions of premarital sexuality. Here

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<sup>94</sup> The majority of the adolescent girls (82%) claimed to be Muslim when asked about their religious affiliation.

problematic situations that take away adolescents' social reputation and worth are handled by prominently invoking the practical evaluative dimension of agency. Among other things, this may entail temporal improvisation and tactics.

For instance, Somoe (16 years old, schoolgirl) living with her two parents laments that “sometimes back my father happened to overhear from other people about my sexual relationship, and he seriously punished me with sticks (*Kipindi cha nyuma baba aliwalihi kusikia akanichapa sana*).” Consequently, Somoe improved her tactics to conceal sexual activities as she puts it:

...my parents and other relatives do not know if I have a boyfriend of late. I normally sneak out from home silently, and I am sure they will never come to know. Other people may see me but they have not heard that I have a boyfriend (*wazazi na ndugu zangu hawajui kama ninaboyfriend siku hizi, natoka kimya kimya nyumbani, najua hawatakaa wajue, watu wengine wananiona lakini hawajasikia nina mtu*).

Likewise, when her sexual relationship with a secondary school teacher was uncovered two years ago, Mwajabu, a girl of eighteen, says “I was reduced to nothing, a person without any worth (*nilionekana sifai na sina maana*) in the eyes of my parents and relatives.” Mwajabu had managed to hide the relationship with her lover for about one year. The two established a sexual partnership during the regional secondary school sports league, which involves selected students to participate in training camps popularly known as *makambi ya UMISETA*. Mwajabu happened to be a good netball player, while the teacher coordinated the training activities. Since the teacher was not stationed at the school where Mwajabu was studying, he bought her a mobile phone so that they could easily communicate.

Like in many other public primary and secondary schools in Tanzania, it is not allowed for students to have mobile phones while at school, at least not in principle. While that was the rule, Mwajabu, by then a form three student, would regularly hide her mobile phone in her school bag and communicate with her partner during the breaks. According to Mwajabu, she had saved him as *honey* and she also had his picture as a background on her mobile phone's screen. One day, narrates Mwajabu:

I had asked my partner to bring me some pocket money somewhere close to our school. But before I wanted to inform him as to where exactly we should meet, one of the



female teachers snatched my phone and she scrolled on the dialed numbers and read the text messages. Then, together with other teachers, they were convinced that I was engaging in a sexual relationship (*uhusiano wa kimapenzi*).

Here Mwajabu had transgressed two school regulations. One was that of coming to school with a mobile phone, the other one was engaging in sexual activities. Especially for the latter, Mwajabu could be dismissed from school as she noted “the teachers had to inform and summon my parents with a letter that I delivered to my sister who was so angry at me and she informed my parents.” At this juncture, Mwajabu’s parents also came to know about her sexual practices. This was indeed a critical moment for Mwajabu, or what Jennifer Johnson-Hanks would call a vital conjuncture (2002). However, she regained her social reputation by finishing her ordinary secondary education, securing a temporary job, renting her own room and helping her parents.

On his part, Haule, a boy aged sixteen, had to break up (*kuachana naye*) with a girlfriend who was accidentally (*bahati mbaya*) known to his parents. His parents were angry with him (*walinigomea*) and demanded that he stopped the relationship and concentrated on school. But later he established a new sexual partnership, and he was concerned with concealing it. In this respect he says, “the current one is not known, I do my things secretly (*nafanya vitu vyangu kwa siri*), I mean (...) not showing off to people (*nisijioneshe oneshe kwa watu*).”

## **5.5 The peers’ expectations: pressure(s) and pleasure**

Unlike many parents, who condemn any form of premarital sexual activities, most of the boys and girls considered it normal to have a sexual partner. From the point of view of the peers, this is in keeping with the expectation that a “modern” adolescent who is “going with the times” (*kwenda na wakati*) ought to engage in sexual practices, not limited to sexual intercourse though. For instance, Mfaume, an adolescent boy of seventeen who lives with his grandmother and has had three girlfriends, one at a time, notes that,

...by having a partner, I feel that I am a human being among people (*najiona na mimi binadamu katika watu*) and (...) I also look like a person with worth (*naonekana na mimi mtu wa maana*), also (...) you also get your reputation (*unapata sifa yako*).

Equally, Haule, who was forced to break off his sexual relationship by his parents, as noted in the previous section, found it inevitable to launch into another sexual dyad. According to him this is because he is convinced that “it is my age to explore sexuality (*mimi kama mimi nataka kuna umri fulani lazima utafanya mapenzi*), and so I don’t want to miss it, I see it is necessary (*ndio mimi kitu kama kile sitaki kinipite, naona kitu muhimu*).” Consequently, Haule cannot imagine being without a sexual partner (*siwezi kukaa bila msichana*).

Like Haule, Mustafa (see portrait 7.4), who had three girlfriends when I met him the first time, but lifted the number to five, before reducing it to one a year later, maintained that, “I am so much attracted to the chicks (*navutiwa sana na mademu*).” Grounding his experiences in sexual desire and peer expectations, Mustafa noted,

I just can’t afford not to have a girlfriend (*siwezi tu kukaa bila msichana*) you know (...) if I say that let me stay without one (*nikisema nikae tu bila msichana*) I tell you (...) there is a certain feeling I experience some sort of unhappiness, you know (*yaani kuna hali fulani najisikia, yaani ninakuwa sina furaha si unajua*). But when I am with a girl I feel very happy (*nakuwa na furaha sana*). Yeah (...) even when I walk around (*niende nikatembee kidogo*), you walk with some vibrance/confidence (*unatembea kidogo kwa munkali*). For me I see a person without a chick as useless/hopeless, and not clever (*mtu ambaye hana demu mimi namuona yaani bwege fulani, yaani kama mtu ambaye si mjanja*).

Correspondingly, Hussein, a seventeen-year-old boy who lives with his parents, established a sexual partnership during the final year of his primary education, following pressure by his peers. Hussein attests, “it wasn’t my hobby to have chicks (*yaani hobi ya mademu sikuwa nayo*) but my peers (*washikaji*) made me find a chick (*walifanya nitafute demu*).” Unlike other boys who confirmed that sexual intercourse is central to their partnership and would end the relationship if the partner would deny them sex (see chapter seven on expectations from a partner), Hussein did not have sex with his girlfriend (*sijawahi kusex nae*). This was despite the fact that the partnership lasted for almost four years before he was told by his peers that his partner had started cheating on him (*washikaji waliniambia demu amekuwa malaya*). Even though he was not intending to set up another sexual dyad in the near future, Hussein felt excluded from his peers because of not having a partner. In this regard he noted, “now that I have no chick I feel very bad (*kwa sasa sina demu najiskia vibaya*).” Ultimately, validating his ties to his peers,

Hussein attested, “it is a common conviction for most of us, the youth of today (*vijana wa sasa*) that having a chick (*kuwa na demu*) is a sign of ‘going with the times’ (*kwenda na wakati*), yeah (...) I personally think so too (*hata mimi naona hivyo hivyo*).”

By virtue of the above, an adolescent without a sexual partner is looked down upon as being either unattractive (*hana mvuto/mbaya/hapendwi*) and backward (*mshamba/bibi*) or physically and mentally impaired (*sio mzima/akili zake sio nzuri*). In addition, not having a sexual partner is equated with being sexually incompetent, especially among boys. An adolescent in this position of worthlessness is addressed with insulting expressions, though in a joking manner. For instance, he is ridiculed as not clever (*sio mjanja*), useless/hopeless (*bwege/boya*), being more childish (*ana mambo ya kitoto*) and having “a mouth filled with gravel and cement” (*domo zege*), meaning that he cannot utter a word to persuade a partner. Another metaphor is a snake that cannot bite (*nyoka wa kibisa*). All together, the boy is stigmatized as a fan of masturbation (*punyeto*).

Furthermore, the social reputation of adolescents was also gauged in terms of the type of sexual partnerships. Although adolescents considered the ability to restrict oneself to a single sexual partner as an absence of sexual lust (*hana tamaa*), for girls this was regarded as self-control against “temptations” (*vishawishi*) from men. Such girls were ascribed a positive image of being in control of their sexuality (*ametulia*) and having good manners (*tabia nzuri*). Whereas girls with more than one partner were perceived as lacking sexual humility (*wanatamaa/hawajatulia/mapepe*), and in some extreme cases demonized as prostitutes (*malaya*), their male counterparts enjoyed the reputation of being real men (*mwanaume wa ukweli*) equipped with the skill and ability to handle multiple partnerships (*kidume/mkali/noma*).

Equally important, adolescents who were in sexual partnership(s) felt that being able to keep their sexual practices secret from parents was a significant dimension of respectability. Thus, displaying any sexual activity, particularly for girls, was seen as being disrespectful. In this sense, these adolescents were aware of the possibilities for parents to suspect their sexual activities.

For instance, the common expressions in response to whether one's sexual relationship is known to *others* apart from peers included, "my parents do not know but other people know about it (*wazazi wangu hawajui lakini watu wengine wanajua*).” In other cases the response was, "other people know about it but I am not sure about my parents (*najua watu wengine wanajua lakini sina uhakika kama wazazi wanajua*).”

Also, there are those like Mfaume, who reported that their parents were not aware, but one of their partners' parents knew about their sexual partnership (*wazazi wangu hawafahamu ila kwa wazazi wake yeye mama yake anafahamu*). An account of Mfaume's experience shows that his partnership was known to the mother of his girlfriend due to a call he made at a moment when she was with her mother. The latter took her daughter's phone and copied Mfaume's number who happened to be a motor cyclist and often gave rides to the mother. Then the mother, pretending to be a customer asking for a ride, called for him but when he picked her she questioned and warned him that if the daughter got pregnant he would be made to answer.

Additionally, there are a few adolescents who are not aware and pay no attention to the matter. Mahazi, a nineteen-year-old male adolescent is a case at hand. His response was "mh! I even don't know if they know that I have a girlfriend (*mh! hata sifahamu, kama wanajua mimi nina girlfriend*).” Finally, some of the adolescents were absolutely sure that their parents and other community members are aware of their sexual partnership(s). This included but was not limited to most of the adolescent mothers. I return to this point in chapter seven where respective cases are examined with more empirical details.

The importance of concealing either a sexual partnership, if it is not known yet, or sexual activities, or both, is evidenced in relation to how parents and others respond. Both boys and girls perceive that whereas some parents would take stern measures against them, the *others* do not bother about it (*wananichukulia kawaida*). Nevertheless, display of sexual relationships is considered a threat to the social reputation and most adolescents who pay attention to this aspect make an effort to conceal their sexual partnership and/or sexual

activities. The question why an adolescent should be concerned with what is going on in the mind of the parents, points to the central issues about social well-being.

For instance, Malkia, a girl of nineteen living with her mother and who has a boyfriend remarked that, “we hide and you can’t walk in public with your sexual partner while holding hands because *they* will say these children have no respect” (*tunaficha kwa sababu huwezi kupita mmeshikana mikono mnapita mtaani watasema hawa watoto hawana heshima* ). In this context, the word *they*, refers to the *others* who may or may not include the parents.

Recounting his experience Abdul, a seventeen-year-old adolescent boy living with his own mother, and who has a girlfriend also says,

I don't like my girlfriend to come home and I never go to her home either, because of the impression I have made in my neighbourhood from the neighbours to my own mother, the way they see and observe me, so if I do something like that I feel like downgrading my reputation. After all, my mother trusts me (*sipendi demu wangu aje home wala mimi siendi kwao, kutokana na mimi mwenyewe nilivyojiweka mtaani pale kuanzia majirani hadi maza kwamba wanavyoniangalia hadi wanavyoniona kwa hiyo kama nikifanya kitu kama kile naona najishusha hadhi yangu. Kwanza mama ananiamini*).

Likewise, Musa, an adolescent boy of nineteen with one girlfriend and living with his parents, points out that,

I am too close to my parents but the impression I have created to them is that of greater respect to them such that it is nearly impossible for them to suspect my sexual practices (*Kutokana na mimi wazazi wangu ndio niko nao karibu sana lakini jinsi nilivojijengea na wazazi wangu nawaheshimu sana, yani kwamba hawawezi wakajua tu*).

In addition, Ahmed, a male adolescent living with his parents, affirms the need to conceal his sexual activities due to the experience he has had with his father, or as he put it,

...the issue happened to me one day my father kind of suspected, he summoned me, and warned me not do it again. I apologized to him (...) as you know I keep it underground (...) as you know parents don't like it... (*...ishu hiyi ishawahi tokea siku moja, mzee akashtukia nini, akanikalisha chini, akanielekeza elekeza mimi nikamuomba msamaha, nikaongea naye pale akasema usifanye tena vibaya. Si unajua tena chini chini maana wazazi pale nyumbani hawapendi...*).

Correspondingly, the mother of Asia (one of my informants), recounted to me the experience she had with her daughter, a sister of Asia, who managed to convince her that she was a disciplined girl (*mwali mwenye heshima*) until the day she received a letter from the school where the daughter was studying, informing the parents that Asia's sister was six months pregnant and that, consequently, she was to be discontinued from school. According to Asia's mother "my daughter made me believe her because she would come from school timely, always put on a long veil (*anavaa juba mpaka humu*), frequently go for prayer (*swala*) in the mosque and fast on every Monday and Thursday. I myself have never been that religious." Asia's mother also added,

she never went out of the home after school. You could neither see her going to a video show clubs during the day nor to the disco shows at night (*usiku hatoki hata iwe rumba*). She also never hung out on the road even on a single festival or holiday (*wala sikukuu moja hakanyagi barabarani*).

On the basis of that, and with reference to her experience with other daughters and girls in the neighbourhood, the mother gained confidence and was proud of her daughter's discipline which also meant honour to the parents. In that respect, the mother attested, "so I proudly went ahead to tell people that my daughter is not involved in sexual practices (*huyu mototo wala hafanyi*) and she is dutiful (*ametulia*).” Interestingly, and pointing to why the others do not volunteer to inform the parents of their sons or daughters even when they know about their sexual practices, one of the neighbours to Asia's mother, noted that,

...when we came to realize some changes in the girl, we were afraid (*tunaogopa*) of approaching the mother because she had proudly confirmed to us that her daughter could not be engaging in sexual activities (*anamkanya mwanae hata hawezi kufanya*). So we kept quite for a while waiting for things to erupt themselves (*tunangoja vitu vifumuke*). This was not until the sixth month of the pregnancy when the girl (*mwali*) could no longer make it to school.

## **5.6 Summary**

In this chapter I have focused on the inter-subjective nature of adolescents' sexual practices based on the understanding that sexual relationships are entrenched in other forms of social relations. As such, in their enactments of sexual activities, adolescents strive to "fit into" the lives of both peers and parents in order to achieve social well-being. Here the main thrust was to demonstrate the overlapping sexual subjectivity as

regards adolescents' sexuality in Mtwara Town and, by extension, to depict inter-subjective encounters in the sexual practices of individual adolescents. In the first place, I examined the forms of social respectability by scrutinizing parental and peer expectations concerning individual adolescents' sexual lives. Secondly, I enquired into the lived experiences as regards gaining and regaining sexual respectability.

Apparently the articulation of various forms of social respectability related to adolescent sexuality is evident in the sanctions and rewards attached to the adolescent sexual practices. On the one hand, parental expectations disapprove adolescent sexuality as disrespectful, instituting physical punishment and social disregard such as the denial of respect and worth as well as support to the adolescent in question. On the other hand, peer expectations approve of and cherish sexual activities among adolescents by rewarding sexually active adolescents with respect, worth and other positive images. In effect, sexually inactive adolescents are ridiculed and stigmatized as backward, unattractive, physically and mentally impaired, as well as worthless.

Despite some elements of gender differences in the articulations of parental and peer expectations, both male and female adolescents struggle to fit into multiple social expectations in order to attain desired forms of social reputation. In concrete terms, adolescents enact several responsive and proactive engagements. These include but are not limited to concealing sexual activities from the parental sites along with managing impressions both in relation to peers and parents. How individual adolescents manage to inter-subjectively execute the aforementioned engagements is the subject that I address with rich empirical detail in the subsequent chapters.

## 6. TYPOLOGY OF ADOLESCENT SEXUAL PARTNERSHIP FORMATIONS

Having looked at the inter-subjective rhythm of adolescent sexual life in chapter six, the present chapter explores forms of adolescent sexual partnerships. I aim at teasing complexities from the lived sexual and reproductive experiences of the adolescents. This is in keeping with the expectation that situations in which sexual and reproductive practices are enacted are not only diverse but also dynamic (Fuglesang 1994, Liljeström et al. 1998, Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001, Johnson-Hanks 2006, Halley 2012, van Reeuwijk 2010). As a collary, a flexible and fluid (not rigid) typology of adolescent sexual relationship formations is proposed for the sake of capturing diversity in lived experiences. This is because, as I lay bare in the portrayals of individual adolescents' experiences, a person can shift between and /or integrate two or more types of sexual partnerships depending on the situations he or she has to deal with. Furthermore, I combine the sexual partnership with living arrangements in order to illuminate the manner in which inter-subjective engagements play out in different social and cultural contexts of social action.

Moreover, as we shall see, the living arrangements of adolescents in Mtwara Town are not homogeneous. Although most of the adolescents were living with parents, the latter were not necessarily their fathers and mothers. It is common to find adolescents living with a father and a stepmother, or the other way round. This is indicative of the fact that re-marriage practices have so far been a commonplace in Mtwara (see also Liebenow 1971, Bangser 2010). Some adolescents were living with single parents, especially mothers. To a certain extent this is due to high rates of divorce and separation in the region, along with adult mortality (see URT 2011, Halley 2012).

Another common living arrangement involved adolescents living with guardians such as *mjomba* (uncle, mainly a brother to one's mother), *bibi* (grandmothers) *babu* (grandfather) and *shangazi* (aunt, sister to one's father) as well as *mama mdogo* (aunt, sister to one's mother). In addition, siblings, namely *kaka* (brother) and *dada* (sister) as well as *binamu* (cousin), played an import part as guardians. Although hosting children



can be attributed to family breakdown due to divorce, separation or death of one or both parents, it is not always the case in Mtwara Town, and of course elsewhere in Africa (see Christiansen et al. 2006). Children, adolescents, youth and even adults may live with relatives for different social and cultural reasons. In actual fact, this practice comes with many social and cultural values and meanings. For instance, the ability to host relatives may express one's economic status, degree of integration, commitment to family members and virtue, among others.

Equally important, adolescents, both males and females, were also increasingly renting their own rooms and living alone or with friends. Also, some adolescents were already married or even re-married and were living with their husbands, with or without a child or children. Likewise, adolescents can be found in either temporary or extended cohabitation with their sexual partners. Finally, some adolescents also live in households where they are employed as house maids commonly referred to as *house girls* and *house boys*. Thus, the living arrangements in which adolescents are situated or situate themselves, or both, are less homogeneous and demand a differentiated understanding.

For the presentation, I use portraits, or vignettes along with adolescents' statements, and fieldnotes. This mode of presentation is favoured here in order to demonstrate the depth and details of individuals' lived experience, which is fundamental to our understanding of the underlying structures of such experiences and the nuances of individuals' actions- from the actors' points of view.

## **6.1 Being in a sexual dyad and living with parents/guardian**

Most of the adolescents in Mtwara Town have been part of a sexual "dyad" while living with their parents or a guardian at some point in their sexual lives.<sup>95</sup> The sexual partnerships of this kind are normalized by peers but restricted by parents for various reasons outlined earlier in chapter five, and will be dealt with in detail later in the subsequent sections. Suffice to point out here that an adolescent makes efforts to

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<sup>95</sup> Simulating the socially valued sexual union, sexual partners in a dyad refer to each other as *mchumba wangu* (my fiancé/fiancée), *mume wangu* (my husband), *mke wangu* (my wife), with or without marriage prospects.

concurrently maintain a sexual partnership and circumvent parental restrictions. Among the issues that concern both male and female adolescents is the wish to conceal the sexual activities and/or the partnership from the parents, and to some extent, the *others*. This is vital in his or her efforts towards both showing some respect (*heshima*) to, and gaining a positive image from, the mentioned actors.

Equally, he or she ought to satisfy the demands of the partner towards enhancing the partnership and its associated opportunities such as affection, material gains and marriage prospects. The latter two are more important for female than for male adolescents. Thus, the adolescents in question strive to avoid the risk of rejection (*kuachwa*), to be cheated on (*kutendwa*) and the associated impressions on the part of peers. These may include the shame (*aibu*) of failing to commit the sexual partner (*kuchukuliwa noma*) as it feeds back on the actor's degree of attractiveness and sexual skills. Also, the loss of opportunities, both real and potential, that a person enjoys from the partnership matters a lot, particularly for girls.

Since both girls and boys consider sexual intercourse as among the vital sexual activities in their partnerships,<sup>96</sup> there are only few sexual dyads characterized by "total" abstinence. For instance, as mentioned earlier, Hussein, who was in a sexual dyad for almost four years without having sex, is a case in point. He attributed the decision for his girlfriend to start cheating on him to his inability to provide her with money any longer, or, as he puts it, "when she saw that I am not able to provide her with money, she despised me, and decided to look for motor cyclists of today so as to get money (*baada ya kuona mimi simpi hela, akanidharau akatafuta madereva wa pikipiki wa sasa hivi, ili apate hela*)."<sup>97</sup> However, it is also possible that the girlfriend could no longer continue abstaining. Indicating the possibility for an adolescent to be in love without necessarily practising sexual intercourse, Hussein added, "having been betrayed by her (*kutendwa na yule*), now I can't fall in love anymore but I will be admiring (*sasa hivi sipendi tena*,

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<sup>96</sup> See boys' expectations from their sexual partners in chapter seven.

<sup>97</sup> It is important to note here that motor cyclists are preferred by girls because they have a regular income and can afford the various needs of their partners. It was a common expression among boys that "the motor cyclists are taking our chicks" (*madereva wa pikipiki wanachukua mademu wetu*).

*siwezi nikapenda tena ila tu nitakuwa natamani).*”

The betrayal was also a turning point for Hussein, and it opened up more room for judgement and projectivity. In particular, and based on his conviction that money matters, Hussein said, “I will have a chick but not now (...) after my advanced level education,<sup>98</sup> and when I get a job, I will find a chick (*nikishamaliza hadi kidato cha sita nikija kupata kazi ndio nitakuja kutafuta demu*).” Important to note in this case is the fact that Hussein was also concerned with the parents’ expectations and he succeeded to conceal his sexual activities such as petting, hugging and hanging out at the beach with his partner.

On the contrary, the experience of Mfaume, as mentioned earlier in chapter six, further points to the dynamics inherent in a sexual dyad. For instance, he switched from being satisfied with total abstinence to intolerance concerning the latter in a sexual partnership. In these regards he recounts:

...in the past when I started these things (*kipindi naanza mambo yenyewe*), upon proposing to date a girl and getting her accept (*mimi nimemtongoza na amenikubali*), I would deeply feel satisfied (*moyo umeshalizika tayari*) just by meeting her and exchanging stories/hitting the story (*ninakutana naye tu nikapiga story*). Eeh (...). I didn’t have the desire for sex (*hamu ya kufanya vitu sikuwa nayo*). So it is possible that some men can be like that (*ina maana inawezekana wapo wanaume wa namna hiyo...*), but (...) that is impossible for me now (*ila mimi kama mimi sasa hivi hamna*). Eeh (...) I simply delete her (*nafuta kabisa*) because if she has accepted but denying me sex I better leave her (*bora niachane naye*) as she will be just fooling me (*ananizingua*), and (...) ends up wanting me to provide for her needs (...) so she simply want to earn from me (*anakuwa anataka kukusanya kipato kwangu*).

The above passage from a series of conversations with Mfaume indicates that an adolescent can change what he desires and expects from the partnership. Thus, each of the partners is expected to actively participate in the life of the other. Equally important, Mfaume is also concerned with his reputation in the eyes of his parents. Since he lives with his grandmother, he confirmed that “I very much respect my grandmother such that I have never brought any woman home (*namheshimu sana bibi sijawahi kumleta mwanamke nyumbani*).”

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<sup>98</sup> Hussein had just completed his final examination for ordinary secondary education and was thinking of pursuing further education as a path to getting money and a better life.

For the perspective of female adolescents, I rely on two cases here. The first one is Somoe (aged sixteen) who goes to school and lives with her parents whom she considers being responsible and caring to her (*Kiukweli nashukuru wananipenda vizuri na wananijali kwa kila kitu ninachokitaka...ndio wananisomesha*). During our first three visits, she had a boyfriend and reported that she was both satisfied with him (*nina boyfriend mmoja tu ananitosha*) and what she gets from him, though not quite enough (*anachonipa naridhika nacho hata kama kidogo namshukuru Mungu kwa ninachokipata*). Accordingly, she attributes her satisfaction to her feeling of love towards him and her awareness that he loves her, as she remarked, “after all we love each other (*hata hivyo tunapendana na mpenzi wangu*).” To prove her commitment to the partnership, Somoe takes an active role which demands for concrete actions across various realms such as emotional support when he is frustrated (*kumliwaza*), which may or may not involve sex, the practical task of doing his laundry (*kumfulia nguo*) and bodily expressions of affection such as kissing (*kumchumu*).<sup>99</sup>

Inherent in her efforts is the aspiration to marry, or as she puts it, “I admire becoming a ‘mother-house’ with my current loving ‘husband’ (*mimi natamani kuwa mama mwenye nyumba na mume wangu huyu huyu tunaependana sasa hivi*).” At the same time, Somoe has managed to conceal her sexual activities from her parents, though she is aware that other people know about it (*wazazi hawajui ila watu wengine wanajua*).

During the sixth visit, Somoe was in conflict (*tumegombana*) with her partner following his realization (he was told by someone, *amesikia kwa watu*) that she was cheating on him with another man. According to Somoe, she had apologized (*nimemuomba msamaha*) to him but he was still mad at her. At this point, Somoe was waiting to hear from the boyfriend, saying that, “I still love him, I only accepted the other boy because he insisted (*bado nampenda, nilimkubalia huyu mwingine maana alikuwa ananisumbua*).” Yet, she was ready to wait for another suitor to show up in case the boyfriend she loved did not accept her apology.

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<sup>99</sup> In chapter seven, I examine in more empirical detail: the expectations; how both male and female adolescents thrive in sexual partnerships, and what constitutes the signposts to enable shared actions.

Malkia provides another experience of adolescent girls in a sexual dyad. As mentioned earlier (in chapter five), she lives with her mother, following the death of her father five years ago. She was working as a shopkeeper at a cosmetics store.<sup>100</sup> She spends most of her days at the shop except on Sundays. Most of our interviews with her were conducted at the shop and we only visited her at home once. By our final visit, she was in her third sexual partnership. About her experience Malkia recounts:

I started my first sexual relationship while in secondary school. I loved my partner who was few years older than me (...) he was in collage while I was in school (*alinizidi kidogo hata kielimu alinitangulia*). We used to meet regularly during holidays as he was studying away from the town (...) and later when he came back I had gone for computer training outside the Mtwara. Because my parents are very strict (*wakali*), particularly my mother (...), it was not very easy to be allowed to go outside home except for schooling purpose and visiting friends and relatives. (...) over the weekend I would ask permission to visit a friend then use such opportunities for sexual activities including sex (*yaani nafasi ninayopata mimi naweza tu nikasema naenda pale kumtembelea rafiki yangu basi kwa hiyo ndio chance kama hiyo kufanya mambo yetu*).

Clearly, Malkia was in a *geti kali* situation especially because she was still in school. Yet she had to manoeuvre around the strict parental restrictions in order to satisfy both her own desires and those of her boyfriend. The latter was also aware of Malkia's situation, and he accordingly adjusted himself to take advantage of whatever loophole so as to sustain the partnership, as noted by Malkia:

My boyfriend was also aware of the environment at home on how to escape (*yeye mwenyewe alishayajua mazingira ya pale nyumbani, jinsi ya kutoka*) even on the Sundays (*hata hiyo jumapili*). In other days he could time to meet me on my way from school (...*labda yaani kwamba anategea mida hii atakuwa anarudi...*).

When finding that important aspirations in a partnership are not satisfied, it is not uncommon for the respective adolescent to break up. The tensions leading to separation are often multiple. For example, in Malkia's first partnership, the question of availability of a partner whenever needed proved to be very powerful on the part of her boyfriend. Malkia narrates:

(...) things changed when my boyfriend got a job posting in Arusha (...) we were just communicating (*tukawa tunawasiliana tu*), but it reached a time he did not call without me calling him (*lakini ikafikia kipindi mpaka kila siku nimkumbuke mimi*), even after a week (...*nisipopiga mimi tunakaa week*). Can you imagine a week for

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<sup>100</sup> The shop is advertised as "ladies zone". Here a variety of cosmetics are sold along with trendy dresses for women.

lovers without communication (*wewe unafikiri mtu na mpenzi wake watakaa week*). This is not how we were used to (*sio kweli yaani kwamba tulivyozoeshana*). We went on like that (...) what worried me was when we had not communicated for a month, and I would call him at night but he would say “I will call you back” but never called (*unaweza ukawa unampigia simu usiku anakuambia subiri kwanza nitakupigia, na ilikuwa inafika mpaka asubuhi hamjawasiliana*). I would send him text messages but he did not respond (*natuma meseji hazijibiwi*). Since I was about to sit for my final examination, I decided to concentrate on my studies to avoid failing exams. Upon the completion of my studies I went back home (...), then I realised that he cheated on me with another girl when he came home while I was away for the computer training. (...). Later the girl followed him to Arusha where they are living together.

For Mfaume, the failure of his partner to keep her promises, giving lame excuses, made him suspect that she was not interested (*nikimuita anazingua, asifike anatoa sababu zisizo na msingi*) and therefore he simply dropped her (*naghairi*). As mentioned earlier, Hussein rejected his partner due to cheating. In fact, most boys considered this a serious transgression on the part of the partner.

Overall, it is common among adolescents to break up and establish new sexual relationship(s). In other words, the turnover in sexual partnerships is high (see table 7.1).

Table 6.1: Turnover of sexual partnership(s) N=40

Number of sexual partnerships ever enacted	Girls (n=20)	Boys (n=20)
In a first sexual partnership	2	1
In a second sexual partnership	3	2
In a third sexual partnership	5	4
In a fourth or more sexual partnership	10	13

From the above matrix, it is clear that most of the research participants were in the fourth partnership, or more. What happens between ending one partnership and entering the next one, entails a wide range of responsive engagements enacted by adolescents. I address three of them here. Temporally abstinence, commonly known as *kupumzika*,<sup>101</sup> literally meaning to take a rest or pause for a while, can be the first and foremost response. For

<sup>101</sup> *Kupumzika* was also used to refer to temporary abstinence from sexual intercourse only, a common practice in partnerships. Both boys and girls confirmed that this happens in situations where, for example, they wanted to concentrate on their studies just before the examination period, during *Ramadhani* (fasting month), or when they were in conflict with each other.

example, when she confirmed that it was no longer possible to win back her partner, Malkia did not immediately enter into a new sexual partnership. In this respect she says:

...I had to give up (*nikakata tama*). It was very painful (*roho iliniuma*), I cried a lot (*nililia sana*), and it was hard to forget (*ilikuwa vigumu kusahau*). I first had to restrain myself from sexual activities for a while (*kupumzika*) while waiting for another suitor (*atakae nifaa*). After four months, I met my current boyfriend (*ndio kumpata huyu wa sasa*).

A year later Malkia had rejected the second boyfriend on the basis that he failed her in terms of “care”.<sup>102</sup> Specifically Malkia noted, “I know for sure he is capable of helping me out with my small needs but whenever I tell him, he is always full of excuses (...) he has failed in terms of care. Unlike in her previous experience, here it did not take long to establish a new relationship, presumably because she already had started interacting with her new partner. This time she was not bothered because she left him (*nimemuacha*) as opposed to being left (*kuachwa*) in the first partnership.

An adolescent can engage in casual sex with one or more partners (*wa mara moja moja, chapa isepe*, ‘loose ball’) before he or she establishes a new and relatively stable sexual dyad or even goes back to the old partner. For instance, Mfaume resorted to casual partners as a coping strategy during the transition between breaking up one partnership and establishing a new one. This helps him to avoid getting into multiple and concurrent partnerships in order to have back up. Leila, an adolescent girl (see portrait 7.5) who, after the unexpected ending of her first relationship, engaged in casual sexual activities before establishing another relatively stable partnership(s).

Equally important, adolescents can enact multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships, the sexual formation that I further explore in the next section. Thus, an adolescent may have one sexual partner for a certain period of time, then change to another partner, abstain temporarily or/and have multiple sexual partnerships. It is never a linear and coherent route but rather a dynamic and complex trajectory (see also Johnson-Hanks 2002, 2006).

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<sup>102</sup> I discuss in greater detail the notion of care in the context of sexual partnerships in chapter seven.

## 6.2 Living with parents and handling multiple sexual partnerships

Unlike in a sexual dyad, here the adolescent is involved in more than one sexual relationship along with other social relations with other actors such as parents, peers, and others. Put in other words, by enacting multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships, an individual adolescent adds to the social ties and expectations, and, hence, to the contradictions, uncertainties and ambiguities that he or she has to engage with. This is in keeping with the expectation that the respective adolescent not only has to engage with several partners with different expectations, but also take care of the expectations on the part of parents.

Handling multiple partnerships entails being able to avoid *kugonganisha*, meaning collisions or clashes between different sexual partners. Casual partners may not bother much about the long-term partners but the latter may be concerned, hence they are not supposed to know that they share a man or woman. Exceptions are in cases where adolescents date a partner whom they know he or she has another partner.<sup>103</sup> Failure to properly handle partnerships might result in *kugonganisha*, which, in turn, could lead to either verbal or physical fights, or both. This holds the risk of making the *others*, including parents, become aware of the respective adolescent's sexual activeness. This is said to require a lot of "brainwork" (*kutumia akili sana*). Still, boys justify this type of sexual partnership on the basis of uncertainties involved in a sexual dyad. As depicted in the previous section, these include, among other things, the risk of a break up, of being cheated on (*kutendwa*), of unfulfilled appointments (*kuzinguliwa*) especially when a girl

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<sup>103</sup> The practice echoes different forms of extramarital sexual relationships such as *nyumba ndogo* (small house, literally meaning a small house but used in this context to refer to female sexual partner(s) besides one's wife or wives). Likewise, *mafiga matatu*, a relatively old Kiswahili expression literally meaning "three cooking stones". But in this context, it implies that just as three stones are need to hold a pot over the fire, a woman needs multiple partners to be fulfilled (see also Plotkin et al. 2013). The most recent expression of the *mafiga matatu* phenomenon is *ndoo na vidumu*, which literally means "a bucket and flasks". This connotes that as a backup in case of stumbling one needs to carry flasks along with a bucket. As for sexual partnerships, a woman needs multiple partners along with a husband or regular partner, so that in case the latter drops or abandon or fails to provide for her, she has a backup (cf. Haram 2004, Helle-Valle 1999).



is coming from *geti kali*, unreliability in terms of care, and failing commitment in the partnership.

***David: only one girlfriend is headache (portrait 6.1)***

David, seventeen years old, secondary school adolescent with four girlfriends, portrays situations where adolescents resort to multiple sexual partnerships as both responsive and proactive engagements in view of being cheated on or frustrated by a partner. In this case, having several sexual partners serves as a *buffer* against the personal and social stress associated with losing a partner. Like David, several boys maintain to have entered into multiple sexual relationships following *kutendwa* (to be acted upon), meaning a painful lived experience from a past relationship with one's sexual partner, where a person was so in love that he invested a lot in the relationship, but ended up by being betrayed. As we shall see in the portrait, the investments have emotional, social and material dimensions.<sup>104</sup>

I met David for the first time at his home where he lived with his mother and uncle, following the death of his own father. But three months later he had moved to join his mother, who according to David, had decided to form her own home away from her brother so as to avoid potential conflicts, especially with her sister-in-law (*si unajua tena mawifi*). David has his own room (*gheto*). Narrating his sexual life stories, David says “at the beginning when I started engaging in sexual activities (*nilipoanza mapenzi*) at the age of fourteen, I only had one girlfriend but now I have four.”

As to why he enacted multiple partnerships, David claims, “when I had only one partner I was thinking a lot about her most of the time (*yaani nilifikiria sana kuhusu yeye*). I also

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<sup>104</sup> Girls also experience incidences of *kutendwa*. In this context, a boyfriend whom she once loved so much betrays the girl by cheating on her with another girl or woman. There are several cases where girls resort to multiple partnerships in response to such a situation. However it is also a truism that most girls would either break up and establish a new monogamous relationship or forgive the boyfriend and move on with the relationship. The latter scenario is associated with the imaginary of men as lacking sexual humility (*wanaume sio wavumilivu*). Related to this is another notion, namely, that men can have multiple partners but still love only one, and the possibility is always there that she could be the one who is loved. In addition, it is shaming to allow your partner to be taken by another girl. This can be taken as lack of sexual competence on the part of the girl.

happened to love her, you see and I felt like she also loved me. But at the end of the day something happened that made me change my mind.” Stressing on how he was committed to his girlfriend, David adds, “you see I loved her to the point that her mother and all other relatives, except her father, knew about our relationship.”

Being known to the girlfriend’s parents is likened by David to a sacrifice or a sense of commitment. Although he did not want his own mother to know about the relationship, it was his young sister who revealed it to his mother after the sister saw a photo of the girl in David’s room which she then showed to his mother when he was away from home. According to David, things changed when the two started secondary education and they were enrolled in different school. On this he recounts,

...she got bad company (*marafiki wabaya*) and I tried to warn her about life and education but that chick (*yule demu*) got lured and she was tempted (*akashawishiwa na akashawishika*). What I cannot forget was the day when I went with her to a club and I did not like her bad clothes (*vinguo vibaya*) over which I had always quarreled with her. You see I got angry and did not say anything but took her on a tricycle (*bajaji*) and send her back home.

In the morning, David continues, “I heard that she went out with her sister at night after I had dropped her. She continued with her habit of going out at night and in the end I saw that she was not the right girl for me (*mwisho wa siku nikaona huyu demu hatonifaa*).” Showing how he was forced to reflect on and imagine his situation, David asserts, “I asked myself, why all the headache when the chicks are in abundance (*mademu wako wengi*). You see, that is why I have set my own standards of not having only one girlfriend, because one girlfriend gives you headache (*demu mmoja anaumiza kichwa*).”

David strives to handle multiple partners to avoid collision which could challenge his reputation in the neighbourhood. He insists that he manages his sexual practices with chastity and respect (*mimi mtulivu kwa sababu mimi nafanya mambo yangu kiheshima*). He also believes that it is important to show good judgment and discipline in eyes of the people so that the community takes you as a youth with good morals (*jamii ikuchukulie kama wewe kijana una maadili mazuri*). For him, one way to go about it is:

(...)to be careful in my things (*mambo yangu*) so that when you walk around the neighbourhood people should say that boy has good manners, for that you need to

showcase certain habits that are cherished in the neighbourhood (*vitabia fulani hivi ambavyo watu mtaani wanakuwa wanavifurahia*).

In that respect, David likes studying and has study groups with girls and boys, so he uses the girls to provide him with partners so that he is not seen hanging out with girls. In addition, he uses his male friends to intervene in potential scenarios of collision between partners. And, above all, he is humble to people of all ages. Here David grounds his practices in his past experience with neighbours that made him lose his social reputation and he admits that it was his own fault. Narrating on what happened, David blames himself:

(...)after all I had my own room but on that Friday I was sick coming home from school, I went to my mother's bedroom and slept on the small bed of my young sister (...) one of my girlfriends was informed by my friend that I was not feeling well, so they came together to see me. They found me in my mother's bedroom. Because that girl loves me she forced herself inside (*akaingia ndani kabisa katika chumba cha mama*). At that point some of the neighbours (*majirani*) saw her and when my mother came back they told her that my girlfriend and I had sex on my mother's bed.

David claims that, "this was not true, but my mother was furious and asked me to disappear as she did not want to see me because of such a transgression." Knowing his mother (*namjua ni mama yangu*), he knew that she would calm down, but David also considered that was the only home and parent he had. So he disappeared for a while and came back to apologize to his mother (*nikamuomba samahani mama*), and she forgave him. This was important for David's participation in the family life as he rightly puts it, "we continued to live well with my mother (*nikawa naishi tena na mama vizuri*).

Multiple partnerships, as in the case of David, are enacted to function like a cushion in case of a breakup. Rather than ending up frustrated, the actor proactively prepares for moments of crisis in sexual relationships. What is also clear here is that the actor (David) has a stake in concealing his sexual partnerships, not just from his mother but also from the neighbours and other sexual partners. At the same time he has to ensure that the partnerships are known to his peers. In all situations, the actor is trying to gain, regain and enhance his social reputation, while satisfying his personal desires.

***Kaziga: kuweka akiba: Multiple partners as backup (portrait 6.2)***

This portrait of Kaziga, a seventeen-year-old boy, aims to show multiple partnerships as responsive engagements against situations of unreliability on the part of partners. It also depicts how the practice provides coping mechanisms towards the *geti kali* phenomenon. Like for many other boys, having multiple partners provide Kaziga with backups in line with what is referred to as *kuzinguliwa*, meaning not being certain of the availability of a girlfriend in moments when she is highly needed to satisfy sexual desires or to show up before their peers at a party or in a club.

Kaziga lived with his father and a stepmother until his parents decided to move to another house because their own house had no electricity. According to him this was because his father's job requires him to use gadgets like a laptop, which needs access to electricity. As a result, Kaziga is now shunting between his father's new home where he goes to eat (*kupiga menu*) and their old house where he has his own room (*nina gheto langu mwenyewe*). Here he lives with tenants in his father's house whom he refers to as his own tenants (*wapangaji wangu*).

When I entered Kaziga's room I was struck with several pictures of renowned international musicians which he had cut from newspapers and magazines and glued on the wall (*picha za ukutani*). Among the images of artists he had collected were Jay-Z, Tupac Shakur, Lady Gaga and Beyonce. For this he says, "I like these artists so much and that is why they are in here (*kwa sababu nawapenda sana hawa wasanii ndio maana wapo hapa*)". He also likes dancing which he calls *kushake* (shaking) and leads a group of four dancers. Kaziga was dressed up in jeans, body tight, and a shirt when I met him after school hours. He believes this makes him look smart and attractive, so much so that girls have approached and confessed that they like him. To prove this to me, Kaziga claimed "three girls have seduced me because of being attractive and I have had sex with them (*wasichana watatu wameshawahi kuniambia wananipenda kwa sababu ninavutia na mpaka nikafanya nao mapenzi*)".

About his sexual relationships, Kaziga says, "I have several girlfriends (...), you know, when you only have one there comes a day she lets you down and then you start

wallowing in deep thoughts (*si unajua (...) ukiwa na mmoja ukibase sana kwa mmoja yaani siku ya siku anaweza kukuzingua halafu ukawa unafikiria sana*).” Grounding the practice in his iterative experiences, Kaziga noted that, “I am not used to having one girlfriend, that is why I have in place some kind of reserves so that it is impossible for all of them to have excuses on the same day (*sasa mimi sijazoea demu mmoja ndio maana nikaweka kama wa akiba akiba fulani kama nikienda huku, sasa mwisho wa siku nini nikija huku na huku haiwezekani wote wasiwe na nafasi*).”

Unlike David from the previous portrait who decided not to love any girl but just use them, Kaziga considers one of his four sexual partners to be “permanent” and trusts her (*namwamini*), while the rest are taken as temporary and referred to as “hit and run” (*chapa isepe*). Kaziga locates the necessity of multiple partners in the variability of parental restrictions of girls’ interactions and movements. In this regard, he says, “my fiancée (*mchumba wangu*), the one whom I consider permanent, she is not allowed outside her home after 9 pm.” In that respect, she is more or less from *a geti kali* and not easily available. According to Kaziga:

(...) some of the partners are allowed to be outside their home until 10pm, 11pm, but with others it does not matter to their parents if they come back home the next day (*hawamuangalii tu hata akirudi kesho asubuhi*). So for me I take it like that, if I want to go to the disco or club, I simply see with whom it is possible to go out with (*naangalia nani naweza kutoka nae*).

Thus, Kaziga is familiar with the appropriate time to meet each of the partners but he is also aware that it is never certain. For instance, notes Kaziga, “if I want to go out with a partner at night I don't even think of the permanent partner but would try it out with the three others.” Since the other three also have other partners, Kaziga acknowledges, “she can tell you that she does not have time as she might already be booked (*ameshawahiwa na mwingine*), so I don't force her (...) I simply go to another one (*naenda kwa mwingine*), but in the end at least one of them would be in a position to go with you.” Importantly, Kaziga strives to handle multiple partnerships in a way so as to avoid collision. In particular, he carefully manages the appointments with the partners.

Equally, Kaziga is concerned with concealing his sexual partnerships from parents and

others. He capitalizes on the nature of the neighbourhood where he lives, which he refers to as *uswahilini*, which in this context alludes to a busy and unplanned street (*ninapokaa mazingira ya uswahilini*). Especially the evenings, when people are busy with their small businesses selling utilities and food items, Kaziga finds an ideal time for his girlfriends to come to his room. The room is also at the rear of the main house so it is not easy for people to notice where exactly the girl is going to. On top of that, he is not afraid of the tenants because to him they do not bother about his affairs (*hawana shida*).

However, Kaziga is not certain whether his father knows of his sexual activities, not least because the father took Kaziga's book which contained sexual instructions on how to satisfy a partner during intercourse. Kaziga had also put photos of his girlfriends (*picha za mademu*) inside the book. Although Kaziga used to hide the book, it just happened one day that his father found the book on the table. Kaziga is not aware of where his father put the book and he does not dare to ask him (*hicho kitabu kuna siku dingi alishakikuta juu ya meza kwa hiyo sielewi amekiweka wapi*). Interestingly, his father has not reacted or spoken to Kaziga about the book.

### **6.3 Cohabiting with a sexual partner**

Cohabitation is another possible formation of sexual partnership among adolescents in Mtwara Town. Cohabiting takes on different shapes among adolescents in town. Several of my informants had experienced what I call *temporary* or *extended* cohabitation, or both in their sexual lives. By temporary cohabitation I mean situations where sexual partners live together for a short period of time, from a few days, weeks or even a month, without being in a formal marriage. On the other hand, extended cohabitation entails a similar situation, but in this context, sexual partners live together for months or even years.

In both cases, the two partners may also be staying with parents or relatives, especially in the case of the boys. But there are also situations where a boy rents his own room(s), hence would just stay with his girlfriend, of course, in a particular neighbourhood. The case was similar for girls renting their own rooms. One of my female informants had

temporarily cohabited with her boyfriend, who was sharing a house with his brother. Another informant cohabits with her casual partners at their homes and in guesthouses within and outside Mtwara Town.

Whereas it was an uncommon practice among adolescent boys in Mtwara Town to move to the homes of their girlfriends, the practice was common for young people from outside Mtwara who were enrolled in secondary school, college or university and were renting rooms across Mtwara Town. It appears that schooling provided these youngsters a space to practise sexual activities in a different way. Although they did not belong to my informants, I frequently engaged in conversation with some of them while hanging out in the streets and in leisure spaces. Unlike many of the adolescents living with their parents and guardians, some of the “newcomers” displayed romantic expressions with their sexual partners such as hugging and kissing, without having to hide. This was mainly because they considered themselves strangers with limited degree of control by their parents or close relatives, or, as one the girl noted, “(...) after all who know(s) me here (*kwani nani ananijua huku*).”

In this sense, being a stranger is regarded as a mask that provides an individual with confidence to indulge in practices that one would perhaps enact differently in places where he or she is known. The only “social control” they were more concerned about was their own peers and perhaps one of their sexual partners, especially if one was engaging in multiple sexual partnerships. The latter was considered a common practice among this group.<sup>105</sup> This further attests to the inter-subjective quality of sexual practices. To further grasp the complexities in cohabiting practices, I also analyse the conditions that necessitate the practices and the ways in which they are realized by the actors.

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<sup>105</sup> The group was generalised as *wanafunzi wa vyuo* (college students), even though it included young people working in the hotels and guest houses, bars and restraints, and gas exploration companies. Important here were also girls from rural areas of Mtwara and Lindi working as commercial sex workers. Whereas some were renting their own rooms, others were hired as bar maid, like in the famous bar-*Kwa Brother Y*. The bar was at the same time operating as a brothel.

### ***Sharobaro and the girlfriends: dynamics of temporary cohabitation (portrait 6.3)***

The portrait of Sharobaro and his girlfriends intends to reveal some of the conditions that allow adolescents boys and girls to temporarily cohabit. It also explains why adolescents cohabit and what unfolds in the course of cohabiting. Importantly, the dynamics involved in cohabitation practices manifest sexual cultural scripts and how adolescents articulate their sexual subjectivities. Sharobaro and his girlfriends are an example of how several boys and girls engage in cohabitation practices in Mtwara Town. Thus, the portrait offers a thick description in response to both how a male adolescent boy creates space for cohabiting at home, and how he handles cohabitation with multiple partners. Equally important is how girls manage to spend several days with their partner(s). Are they permitted by their parents? If not, how do they create space for cohabitation? And why?

I met Sharobaro for the first time at Kambarage, the nearest stop for commuters (*daladala*), motorcycles (*pikipiki/bodaboda*) and tricycles (*bajaji*) from my new home at Shangani West. Sharobaro was among the motorcyclists and it just happened that he was the first to see me as I was approaching the *maskani*, that is, a place where several young people gather and share stories, or what they call “hitting the story” (*kupiga story*). Different from other *maskani* this one involved young men who were engaging in income-generating activities either as drivers of *pikipiki/bodaboda*, *bajaji* and *daladala* or running a small business (*machinga*) as well as food vending especially in the case of young women.

Sharobaro is a twenty-year-old youngster, with a finished ordinary secondary education, a Muslim who goes to mosque occasionally but fasts (though not every day) during *Ramadhan* (the holy month for Muslims). He also lived at Shangani West (planned settlement near the beach) close to my neighbourhood. Sharobaro lives with his father and a stepmother (*mama wa kufikia/wa kambo*). His father retired from formal employment a few years back. Sharobaro is aware that his mother lives somewhere in the rural areas of Newala District in Mtwara region, but he has never seen her. According to him, this is because his father had warned him not to enquire about her because she was not a good person.



Sharobaro has his own room in the main house, close to the living room. Like some of the other rooms in the house (not fully finished yet), his room has no real door and he uses a curtain to ensure privacy. When I asked him what happens when his girlfriends visit him, he said that the music system available in the room provided a space for that. Above all, he knows that, except for his younger sisters, his parents do not have a tendency to enter his room. The room is decorated with wall pictures with romantic imageries (see plate 6.1) and equipped with a music system (see plate 6.2).

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Plate 6.1: Wall pictures in Sharobaro's room

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Plate 6.2: Sharobaro's Music system

Narrating about his past life, Sharobaro, says:

...after my secondary education two years ago, it was not possible to pursue further education, partly because I did not perform well but also because my father had retired. And so he could not afford to pay for me and my young sisters. As a result, I had to start working in order to establish myself and help my father. That is why, to start with, I am torturing my chest (*naumiza kifua*)<sup>106</sup> while looking for other possibilities.

Sharobaro does not own the motorcycle but hires it from the owner and has to pay a fixed amount per day. It is perhaps indicative that Sharobaro's ability to earn for himself but also contribute to the family provides him with the opportunity to assert or articulate identity as an adult (see also Thorsen 2006).

<sup>106</sup> Motorcyclists believe that riding a motorcycle for a longer period of time damages one's chest; often they do not protect their chests by wearing a jacket, partly because of the tropical weather.

As regards his sexual and reproductive life, Sharobaro has had several girlfriends since he commenced his first sexual relationship at the age of fifteen during his first year of secondary schooling. However, he now has three girlfriends. He believes that it is common for boys and girls to have multiple and concurrent partners, but seriously love only one. At the same time, through his own experience, he considers that in a sexual relationship girls are much more concerned with their own desires and needs instead of loving their partner.

Reflecting on his own situation, he now thinks that he has been lucky that the three girlfriends at least show some love for him and he strives in different ways to make them happy. The duration he has been in a relationship with the current girlfriends varies. He has been with Zamda, a graduate of ordinary secondary education, for three years now. She is known to his parents because she sometimes spends a couple of days at his home, assisting in cooking, doing the laundry for Sharobaro and cleaning the house. Mwajuma, a primary school pupil, has been a sexual partner for one year but she is not known to his parents, since she never comes to his home. Asha, also fresh from ordinary secondary school, is Sharobaro's newest partner, the two have been in a relationship for six months. Just like Zamda, Asha has been cohabiting with Sharobaro now and then, spending up to two weeks at his home.

Basically Sharobaro did not enact multiple partnerships simply for fun but as a responsive engagement with concrete situations. He decided to seduce Mwajuma as a backup whenever Zamda was not available because she is always "on the move" between her parents. Whereas her father resides in Dar es Salaam, her mother is based in Lindi town, while her paternal grandmother is in Mtwara Town. But the dynamics of her living arrangement also enable her to occasionally cohabit with Sharobaro. Mwajuma, too, is not reliable because she comes from a *gate kali* and it is only possible for Sharobaro to see her on few occasions. On top of that she does not want to meet him in his room and they normally meet in some bushes near the beach for sexual intercourse.

In fact, when I first asked Sharobaro about his sexual life, he complained about his girlfriend being away for a long time and he was not sure whether she was still committed to him or not. It was during this period that he started telling me that, “there is a small one (*dogo*) –meaning a girl – whom I am chasing. She has a nice figure and I think she will fall prey even though she does not seem to cooperate simply because she has another boyfriend. But I will not rest until I get her (*nitakomaa mpaka kieleweke*).” When he finally succeeded in establishing a sexual relationship with Asha after roughly three weeks, Sharobaro said to me in a boasting tone “bro it is done (*bro tayari*)”, and when I wanted to know what that meant, he said “everything including sex”. When I asked him whether he used condom to protect himself and the girls he said, “I care (*ninajali*)” meaning he uses condom but as we shall see later, he got Asha pregnant.

Asha was temporarily living with her sister, who had no problem with her spending a couple of days away from home, as long as she was informed. According to Sharobaro, Asha’s parents live in Magomeni, one of the suburbs of Mtwara Town. As such, it was easy for Asha to ask for permission from her parents to visit her sister and would spend most of the time cohabiting with Sharobaro. Sharobaro did not tell Asha that he had a girlfriend but he regularly communicated with Zamda on his mobile phone. Unfortunately for Sharobaro, sometimes Zamda would call him late at night, even after midnight, as they often did when the opportunity of cohabiting did not arise. Sometimes, when he failed to pick me up as arranged, he would apologize and explain that he had been chatting on phone with Zamda until midnight, taking advantage of the reduced or free calls offered by mobile companies. I shall return to the use of mobile phones as a space for sexual encounters in chapter eight.

In one of our conversations, I asked Sharobaro how he was fairing with his girlfriends. As usual, he responded with a laugh but added in a lower tone, “aah bro (meaning bother), I had a test last night (*aise bro nilipata mtihani jana usiku*).” When I insinuated further, Sharobaro narrated:

(...) you see Asha has been with me at home for a week now, and she is claiming to be pregnant from me. It happened that Zamda called while I was taking a shower and had left my phone in the room. Because Asha is always suspicious of my regular contacts

with Zamda, I had saved Zamda's name as Juma (a male name). So she picked up and she was confronted with a female voice. But Zamda was also clever she asked my whereabouts and introduced herself as a young sister to me who is in a boarding school.

According to Sharobaro, the problem at this point was not with Asha, but with Zamda who finally found out that he was spending nights with other girls, a fact that he boldly denied. But he said to me "you know a female child remains to be female (*mototo wa kike ni mwanamke tu*).” Here he was not only articulating his masculinity but also building on his sedimented experiences in dealing with similar conflicts with sexual partners. In short, Sharobaro had volunteered to call Zamda in the morning when he left home, and, as expected, she accused him of cheating on her. Meticulously Sharobalo denounced the accusation by making her believe that it was just an attempt to test (*kumjaribu*) her commitment to him by asking his friend's partner to tease her. Although Zamda believed Sharobaro, she remained suspicious.

#### *The collision of Sharobaro's sexual partners*

It was a bright Saturday morning and I was preparing my breakfast at around 9 am, when a motorcycle parked outside my house. I looked through the window, and saw it was Sharobaro. I raised my voice to ask him inside but unlike on other, similar occasions, this time I did not perceive his famous laughter. After a very brief greeting, Sharobaro said to me, "brother, I have a problem and I need your help." While I was trying to figure out to what could have happened, he continued, "Asha and Zamda have met each other and are arguing in my room."

After Asha had spent the night with him, Zamda just walked in, without informing him. He looked somewhat confused while pleading for my support to go with him and try to cool down the two girls. His father was away and his stepmother proved to be of no help by telling them to wait until the father came back the following day. Sharobaro had also tried to ask one of his peers to intervene, but in vain. What was of concern to him was the possibility that the two girls might fight and hurt each other at his home, something that would subject him to trouble with his father and, by extension, with the authorities, including the police.

When Sharobaro and I entered the main house, Zamda was sitting in the living room while Asha was in Sharobaro's room. Sharobaro summoned Asha and he introduced me to the two girls as his elder brother who had come to mediate. To me he said, "bro these are my two women (*bro hawa ni wanawake zangu*).” For me it was the first time to meet the girls, even though I knew a lot about them from him. At this point, I asked each of them to tell me about their relationship with Sharobaro and what the issue at stake was about.

It was Zamda who volunteered to start; she emphasized her position as Sharobaro's long-time partner and that she was still in love with him. She also noted the changes that she had recently experienced in her communication with Sharobaro, when she was out of town and how he had tried to fix her. She also insisted that it was because of her suspicion and commitment to the partnership that she had decided to surprise him on that day and check whether he was cheating on her. To confirm her marriage prospects with Sharobaro, Zamda lamented that, "I have been spending time with Sharobaro here at his home and his parents know what is going on between the two of us. But I am surprised that he never introduced me formally to the parents (*hajawahi kunitambulisha kwa wazazi wake*)". Zamda ended by saying that she now had to rethink her relationship with Sharobaro and allow him to get along with his new partner.

On her part, Asha confirmed that she had recently engaged in sexual relationship with Sharobaro and complained that he made her abandon her former boyfriend. Importantly, Asha made it clear that she was currently pregnant from Sharobaro, and her main concern was now for him to arrange for an abortion. When I probed for the reasons for her determination to abort, Asha, while shedding tears, said, "my parents have promised to find a college for me to pursue further education and I am sure if they get to know that I am pregnant they will not do it (*watakataa kunisomesha*).” To induce pressure on Sharobaro, Asha added, "they way I know my parents, the moment I tell them that he is responsible for the pregnancy they will bring me here, and because I know he is not ready

for that I do not wish to cause trouble to him and his parents (*sitaki kumuingiza yeye na wazazi wake kwenye matatizo*).”

At this point, Asha was articulating her determination to sustain the impression and hopes that her parents had entrusted in her as well as the commitment she has to Sharobaro. To further prove her determination, I asked her whether she was aware of the potential dangers associated with an abortion, in that regard Asha responded, “I know very well, I once accompanied my friend to the doctor and I could hear her screaming to the point that she lost her voice (*sauti ikakauka*). But my sister has told me that if I get the money to pay for an abortion, she will take me to a good doctor (*daktari mzuri*) who she is familiar with.” Asha was also informed by her sister that the fee for abortion was about forty-five thousands Tanzanian Shillings (TZS 45,000). This is equivalent to about thirty US dollars (USD 30). Sharobaro already knew this from his friends. In the end, he agreed to facilitate an abortion but I told them to take time to think about it.

On the other hand Zamda was not pleased with the fact that Sharobaro was prepared to finance the abortion of Asha and she claimed that, “I have been with you Sharobaro for long time now and you have never spent such a huge sum on me, now for your information, if you give her the amount I also demand the same otherwise I am not going to leave this house (*siondoki nyumba hii*).” Finally I intervened by urging Sharobaro to stop confusing the two girls and consider having one girlfriend.

Since Sharobaro had earlier confirmed to me that he was using a condom during sexual intercourse with Asha, my question to him now was, how come she claims to be pregnant? Sharobaro reacted by saying, “you know, brother, it is true that we used condoms every time during the first few sexual encounters but she always complained that the condom caused her pain (*maumivu makali*) and that she was not enjoying it (*hafurahii*), so we stopped using them.” This indeed challenges the discourses that undermine the agency of girls and women in their quest for pleasure in sexual practices, by assuming that it is always the male partners who discourage the use of condoms (see for example, Mgalla and Pool 1997).

This was towards the end of my first long field-stay in November 2011. When I met Sharobaro a year later in December 2012, he told me that Asha had successfully aborted despite some complications and that he still had a sexual relationship with both Asha and Zamda. On why he had not been able to choose one of the two, contrary to his earlier belief that girls are never committed to a partner, he said, “these girls love me and I am used to them now, it is just not easy, bro (*bro nimewazoea hawa mademu nao wananipenda kuwaacha inakuwa ngumu*).” During our conversation the two girls called him at intervals of half an hour, and because he wanted me to confirm that he was still dating them, he received the calls with the loudspeaker on.

Apparently, each girl was complaining about his reluctance to drop the other, though in a joking tone. For instance, Zamda threatened, “I am capable of harming myself and you will be answerable (*naweza kufanya kitu chochote kibaya na wewe ndio utakuwa chanzo*).” Sharobaro tried to appease her by saying, “you and me have come a long way and despite what has happened, you know I care about you (*unajua nakuthamini sana*) so if you harm yourself you will subject me to trouble.” To confirm what Sharobaro was telling her, Zamda immediately asked him, “so, if that is the case, I want to come to your home tomorrow (*basi kama vip kesho nataka nije kwenu*).” Considering the precarious situation he faced by having two partners committed to him and knowing each other, Sharobaro reluctantly responded, “you see it will be difficult to meet at home for the time being but soon things will be ok.” Zamda in a disappointed tone said, “so, these days you do not want me to come to your home (*kwa hiyo siku hizi hutaki nije kwenu*).”

Unlike in other cases where one of the partners decided to end the sexual relationship following a *collision*, what turned out for Sharobaro was that each of the two girls was trying to win him and show the other that she could take him from her. This is because one can also gain the reputation among peers of having managed to snatch someone’s partner while the other was likely to feel ashamed for her inability to commit the partner to her. According to Sharobaro, the two girls were also giving him gifts. For instance, when Asha learnt that Zamda had given Sharobaro a mobile phone, she also made up a

story to get a new phone from her brother, which she then gave to Sharobaro. This is a point I return to in the next chapter.

However, while struggling to avoid the risk of losing the boyfriend and being shamed in the eyes of their peers, the girls in this case were also dealing with parental expectations and restrictions. For instance, Sharobaro described to me what had happened as follows:

... Zamda's father came from Dar es Salaam to visit his mother (Zamda's grandmother). But on that day Zamda had left home and went to visit one of her friends. Her father asked the whereabouts of Zamda in vain, and he decided to intimidate her cousin to take him to places where Zamda usually goes. Zamda's cousin finally brought his father with a company of other relatives to my home.

According to Sharobaro, he was not at home that night so they only talked with his father who told them that he often saw her around but that he was not sure about the relationship with his son and added that he had not seen her on that day. According to Sharobaro, when Zamda heard about this, she never went back to her grandmother, but went straight to her mother in Lindi.

Following that event, Sharobaro's father also felt concerned and cautioned him to stop his relationship with Zamda (*niachane na huyu mtoto*). This was because her parents were complaining that because of Sharobaro she had stopped her schooling (her father wanted her to re-sit the form four examinations) and she was not complying with what her father wanted her to do. Sharobaro's father also intimated that he knew that family, specifically pointing to the grandfather's ability of uttering curses (*kusoma arubadili*) through the Holy Quran. Sharobaro promised his father to terminate his relationship with Zamda. But this only meant that Sharobaro had to start hiding his partnership with Zamda by not cohabiting with her at home, but meeting her in guesthouses instead.

A closer examination of Sharobaro's sexual partnerships reveals several issues. The fact that one is no longer at school and is contributing in some ways to the household budget can grant the opportunity of being considered by parents as grown-up (*amekua*). This status may or may not be accompanied with reduced control by parents and provide an adolescent with some degree of autonomy. In situations where a boy has been allocated



his own room coupled with an understanding that his own interactions with girls are somehow tolerated by his parents, it can be translated that he no longer needs to hide his sexual relationship status from his parents. To be on the safe side, he tries to invite his girlfriend(s) home and assess the parents' reaction. This strongly attests the practical evaluative dimension of agency particularly the aspect of experimental enactment. When it is clear that the girlfriend can spend nights with him without the concern of his parents, then temporary cohabitation practices can be enacted. However this is not guaranteed and it can change situationally and temporarily.

Since girls are expected to maintain chastity (*kujiheshimu*), it is not always easy for them to cohabit temporarily. One of the tactics is to ask for permission to pay a visit to a relative, especially sisters and grandparents, who lives a bit away from home. I shall come back to how girls create space for cohabitation and similar sexual encounters in chapter eight.

In sum, for adolescents, cohabitation entails different things in different situations. It provides an opportunity to feel grown-up (*kukua*), but also a way to convey a sense of affection and commitment to the relationship. Equally, and especially for a girl it is taken as a means toward *kumridhisha* (to satisfy) and a way to commit the one's partner and to claim "ownership" over the boyfriend who she sometimes refers to as husband (*mume wangu*). In addition, it gives her the chance to get to know his parents in a step towards enhancing marriage prospects. More importantly, the two partners get to explore each other and assess whether he or she is the right partner. Indicative in the above case, the act of cohabiting also provided the opportunity for boys and girls to discover whether they were being cheated on by their partners.

In other situations, temporary cohabiting, especially with partners who are strangers in town or with those who live outside of town, provides a space for handling multiple sexual partnerships. More importantly, for girls whose images have been tainted as *malaya* (prostitute) or *janvi la wageni* (a mat for strangers, meaning a cheap girl who sleeps around with anyone), temporary cohabiting is a space to regain or develop a new sense of valued being. It also allows a girl to command more resources from her sexual

partner and use the resources to acquire items that make her *mrembo/mkali* (cute) and *anakwenda na wakati* (“up to date” or “going with the times”). I expand on this point in the next chapter especially portrait 7.2.

### ***Extended cohabitation***

I am not married but I am just living with this man...for two years now  
(Ashura, 18).

I will see if he stops his dependence on his parents and finds a job to enable us have our own life (...) but if he doesn't, I will just wait for his baby to be weaned and go back home to my mother (Leila, 19).

Extended cohabitation was not a very common sexual relationship among adolescents in Mtwara Town. That said, it does not mean that there are no cohabiting adolescents in the town. In fact, it is one of the adolescent sexual practices whereby adolescents live together, either willingly and/or unwillingly without being in a formal marriage. In most cases (with few exceptions in temporary cohabitation), the sexual relationship is known to the parents and other members of the community.

In Mtwara Town, just like many other coastal and Muslim communities in Tanzania, *barua ya uchumba* (letter of engagement) is one of the crucial steps in courtship and marriage arrangements. Regardless of the time that the young people live together, they consider each other not married (but in a trial marriage) if the male partner has not submitted *barua ya uchumba* to the girl's parents. Indeed, the parents and the girl herself remain doubtful as to whether the man is going to confirm the marriage. In cases of separation, *talaka* (divorce paper) is not required in such a situation, an indication that the relationship was not considered an acceptable marriage.

One of the important routes towards extended cohabitation among adolescents in Mtwara Town is through pregnancy or the arrival of a baby. A pregnancy can be both an opportunity and a source of tension in adolescent sexual partnerships. First of all, it exposes the adolescent's hidden sexual status, in other words, here it becomes obvious to the parents that the respective girl has been sexually active; the same goes for the involved boy. If the girl is still at school it results into being expelled, even though, as noted earlier, a guideline has been issued to allow them back to school after delivery (Bangser 2010).

But the question is also whether the parents will still be willing to support the girl having subjected them to *aibu* (shame) and *hasara* (loss). In some cases, adolescent girls loose support from parents or guardians. But in others, parents volunteer to help out in terms of committing the man to take over responsibility for the pregnancy and the baby. The idea is to try to avoid having to bear all the obligations and costs of childrearing and seeing to the possibility of marriage, based on previous experiences with similar circumstances. This is done through the boy's parents who summon and ask him to confirm his responsibility and obligation. In many cases it works out, but in other cases it does not.

Sometimes boys reject responsibility for fear of being jailed in case the girl is a primary or secondary school student. Rejection also occurs when boys are not certain whether the girlfriend was not cheating on them, indicating the value of sexual respectability on the part of the girl. Either way, extended cohabitation between the two sexual partners can occur. If the boy accepts responsibility and at the same time the parents or guardian of the girlfriend deny her support, she can enforce cohabitation with her boyfriend as a way out. At such a point the actor may not necessarily be acting on the basis of a bright resolution but rather on "the fulfillment of a lesser evil" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 1000).

Likewise, the boyfriend can use the opportunity to convince her to live with him. In many cases, the two move in with the boyfriend's family, providing especially where the boy has no means to support the girlfriend and the baby. But they are expected to establish their own household as soon as the boyfriend gains enough muscles to shoulder the obligations of a breadwinner. This can result in marriage, but not always. If it does, then extended cohabitation in this case has enhanced the prospect of marriage for the couple.

In other situations, the boy may reject the pregnancy for whatever reasons. Upon giving birth, information would travel to the parents of the boy about the baby; at this point it is about "our (parents') blood (*damu yetu*)", not the child of an adolescent boy. Parents would take over responsibility to support the mother and the baby, and in some cases, the mother would move to the boyfriend's family for the sake of support and caring for the baby. This also means regular interactions between the partners after having been separated for a while after pregnancy. All the same, it can provide space for the broken sexual relationship to rejuvenate and, as a result, facilitating extended cohabitation.

One of the pertinent questions here is why extended cohabitations do not always result in marriage. To be able to arrive at a convincing answer, it is important to understand that

even though adolescent boys and girls have marriage prospects, they also have clear images concerning the future. In various conversations it became clear to me that adolescent girls imagine the kind of marriage they aspire and would like to pursue. This was often associated with the social imaginary of *maisha mazuri* (better life). “It is not just marriage (*sio bora ndoa*),” as they say, it has to be one that allows the girl to be “the mother-house (*mama mwenye nyumba*)” with some autonomy in the domestic sphere and commanding social respect from others (*kuheshimika kama wengine*).

In fact, what this situation presents here is that a better life is conceived of differently and there are multiple routes to a better life. Unlike in the development discourse, here we see that education is not the only route to a better life for the young people. Indeed, this gives room for explaining cases where adolescent girls drop schooling to cohabit with, or even get married to, their partners, promising them, among other things, a better future. However, if the expectations of both boys and girls are not met within the sexual relationship, it is common to separate and to start a new life (*kuanza maisha upya*). Interestingly enough, here life is never linear and irreversible, but complex and dynamic instead. Expectations and desires may not tally with the concrete situations, hence adolescents have to reconcile and sort out the ambiguities and contradictions as they unfold and, by extension, think of new possibilities. Such moments trigger more projectivity and judgment on the part of the actor (see Emirbayer and Mische 1998)

#### ***Ashura: confronting and escaping extended cohabitation (portrait 6.4)***

This is a portrait of how adolescents engage and disengage themselves with extended cohabitation in the course of their reproductive lives. It also shows the incoherence and dynamics in the life course of young people. Indeed, the case points to the lived experiences of many adolescent girls who actively traverse complex trajectories in the course of their sexual and reproductive lives in Mtwara Town.

Ashura is eighteen years of age, Muslim and has primary education. She was also the mother of a three-year-old child until recently when the child passed away in December 2012. Ashura was raised by her grandparents from childhood on. She does not know her father because he was rejected by her mother’s parents on religious grounds for being a Christian. Her mother got pregnant while she was a secondary school student. Unfortunately, Ashura’s mother died when she was nine years old. In terms of living conditions, Ashura says that things became worse when her grandfather died three years

after the death of her mother. Sometimes it was common for Ashura and her grandmother to spend a day or go to bed on an empty stomach.

During our six visits, Ashura had been cohabiting with the father of her child for two years. A year later she left her partner and moved to her grandmother to start a new life. As she asserts in the opening quote of this section, Ashura did not consider the extended cohabitation as marriage because her partner had not met the requirements for marriage. In this regard Ashura attests, “he has not sent a letter of engagement to my parents (*hajapeleka barua ya uchumba kwa wazazi wangu*).” As I show in the next section, this is an important step in the marriage process in Mtwara Town.

Recounting how she entered into an extended cohabitation with her partner, Ashura told me that she got pregnant when she was about to sit for her primary education final exams. As she puts it, “fortunately, I managed to take my examination before the teachers could discover that I was pregnant.” Although she passed the exams, Ashura could not proceed to secondary education. This was the same time when she already had a baby. Whether she would have been able to mobilize the resources for a secondary education without having become a teenage mother, Ashura asserts, “I know it would have been almost impossible to make it (*isingewezekana*) because my grandparent would not have been able to get the money to pay for the school fees and other costs (*bibi asingeweza kunilipia ada na gharama zingine*).”

However, things also changed when Ashura gave birth, particularly in terms of her relationship with her grandmother. Apparently, the grandmother was disappointed and Ashura felt marginalized (*wakanisusa*). It is not difficult to understand her grandmother’s frustration especially in relation to the hardships in life they were going through, and for the grandmother Ashura had added to the burden. To be able to cope with the situation, Ashura agreed to the proposal of moving in with her boyfriend’s family where she cohabited for two years. In this period much changed, but not in Ashura’s favour. Life became even harder, more or less similar to what she lived through with her grandmother.

Moreover, she feels that her boyfriend is no longer attracted to her and she no longer loves him. In this regard Ashura claims, “these days he has changed (*yaani amebadilika tofauti na zamani*), he can tell you that he is going out, and he comes back very late at night (*muda mbaya*). Sometimes, when you ask him about money for buying food he simply says, ‘I don’t have money’ (*sina hela*).” Such moments invoked more reflections

in Ashura, as she puts it, “so I sit down and think until I feel headache (...*unafikiria mpaka kichwa kinauma*), then I go to my inlaws (*wakwe zangu*) for assistance. At times he comes back not even saying hello (*hata salamu hakuna*)”.

Clearly Ashura ponders about the changes in the relationship, pointing to the tension between what was expected (imagined) and what is happening and, of course, what could happen in future. Consequently, during the sixth visit, when she did not want to meet us at home but at my field assistant’s house,<sup>107</sup> Ashura had thought about new possibilities. In particular, she was thinking about breaking up with her boyfriend and going back to her grandmother as soon as her child was weaned.

According to her, the idea is to start up a new life (*kuanza upya*). Ashura adds that, “I will start up any project and my child will have something to wear, then I will ascend myself (*nitajiinua kimaisha*) in the social life. And later upon God’s grace (*Mungu akinijalia*) I could even get a small casual work (*kibarua kidogo*) to be able to control my life and come to the right track (*kukaa katika mtari sahihi*).” Ashura still aspires for a better life to be able to care of herself, the child and her grandmother. In theoretical terms, as a social actor, Ashura is relating to a better life as an “object of intention” (Blumer 1966: 539) that allows her to imagine the past, present and future. This is reflected in her ideas of re-starting life, confronting the responsibilities of child rearing and becoming a respected person. Even though it was not very clear as to how, when and where, but the intentions were there.

Ashura even told her best friend with whom she went to school, about her current situation and intentions. The friend was in full support of her decision as she visited her and confirmed her life difficulties. A year later, when I talked to Ashura, she had acted upon her intentions to break up with her partner. In fact she was already back with her grandmother. She was also engaging in casual work as a cook at a food-vending kiosk (*mama lishe*).

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<sup>107</sup> Ashura was not sure about the reactions of her partner to our regular visits at her home, so we agreed to convene some of our conversations at Fatma’s place. Even then she would not tell her husband exactly that she was coming for the conversation, rather she often told him that she was visiting her grandmother (*naenda kumuona bibi*).

Unfortunately her child passed away a few weeks after Ashura returned to her grandmother, and a month later her grandmother also passed away. Despite all these crucial events, Ashura feels that she is now ready to face a new life as a young girl determined to achieve a better future. When I asked about her current sexual practice, she responded, “I do not have a partner for now. I can for sure accept one but not for marriage, until I have clear direction in my own life”

***Leila: Looking for another way of life (portrait 6.5)***

The central aim of the portrait of Leila is to shed light on the ways in which adolescents’ extended cohabitation practices are mediated by other actors. Equally important, the case illuminates how interventions of the other actors on the lives of the adolescents do not necessarily impinge upon, but also provide a recipe for the manifestations of agency and creativity on the part of the young people.

Leila is a nineteen-year-old adolescent, a mother of three children, currently cohabiting with the father of her youngest child at his parents. None of her three children share a father. Leila claims to be a Muslim but has never been to the mosque (*siendi mskitini wala nini*). She dropped out of school when she was in standard four due to what she referred to as life hardship (*hali ngumu ya maisha*). Specifically, Leila says, “I could not bear the embarrassment of going to school with a worn out skirt (*nilikuwa najiskia vibaya kwenda shule na skirt imechanika*).”

Since the divorce of her parents, when she was seven years old, Leila had mostly lived with her mother or /and her sister. When I first met Leila she was living with her mother, elder sister, four other siblings and her own son. Describing her younger siblings she noted, “Here I live with my four younger siblings, one from my own father but the other three have their own father (*hawa wadogo zangu watatu baba yao mwingine*).” What struck me was the fact that all of them (seven people) lived in one room rented by Leila’s mother in Ligula kati. At the age of fourteen, Leila worked as housegirl in Dar es Salaam in her effort to deal with the life hardships.

***Leila’s first cohabiting experience***

Leila encountered the experience of cohabiting upon her first sexual relationship. “At the age of 14,” she recounts,

I had my first boyfriend who was a businessman from Mozambique but often lived here in Mtwara Town (...). After I was initiated (*kuwaruka*) I went to Dar es Salaam where I worked as a housemaid. When I came back I lived with my sister who was then cohabiting with her partner, (...) few days of my stay at my sister's place, I realized he (the potential partner by then) was a brother to my sister's partner (*kaka yake alikuwa anatembea na dada yangu*). He used to frequent at my sister's home (*nyumbani pale anazoea zoea*). So we met at home (...) then I moved in his room for three months (*nikawa nakaa nae pamoja kwa miezi mitatu*)”.

Reminiscing how her first relationship ended, Leila says, “we did not argue but my partner (*mwenzangu*) used to make business trips between here (Mtwara Town) and Mozambique on monthly bases. When he travelled the third time, I never saw him to date (*alivyoenda safari ya tatu sikumuona mpaka leo*).” However, Leila made it clear that, at this point, her mother had not been not aware because she thought that Leila was living with her sister. Thus, Leila's sister covered up for her and Leila had to conceal her sexual activities from parents and, to some extent, from the other members of the neighbourhood.

*Leila's route to the current cohabitation: crisscrossing of critical moments*

After the first sexual partnership, Leila had several relationships. Some casual which she calls *wa mara moja moja*, meaning occasional, others for relatively long period or at least regularly. The latter included the fathers of her three children. According to Leila, the father of her first baby proposed to marry her but she rejected on the basis that she simply did not like him, and he later took his child. The father of her second child abandoned her soon after she gave birth, hence she had to raise the child with support from her mother and sister. Based on that experience, and following advice from her mother, Leila started using contraceptives (*kuchoma sindano*) immediately after weaning the second child.

Pointing to what made her pay attention to her reproductive practice, she said, “I was afraid of being impregnated outside wedlock without having someone to provide for you (her) (*nilikuwa naogopa kama hivi kuwekwa mimba za nje bila kuhudumia*).” Indeed, Leila was at the same time pointing to the changes that had occurred to her sexual relationship during our fourth visit. Accompanied by my field assistant, this time I wanted to know from her (Leila) about the ways in which she committed the sexual partner to her. To our surprise, Leila said, “I don't have a sexual partner (*sina mpenzi*).”



In response to our probing as to what had really happened, she noted, “we separated (...) almost a month now (*tumetengana... karibuni mwezi sasa*).”

Leila narrated further that, “we quarreled due to his things (*mambo yake*) because (...) I am pregnant (*mimi ni mjamzito*), I have told him and he accepted but he has not confirmed this to my parents neither has he introduced me to his parents (...) its just the two of us who know until now (*tunajuana wenyewe tu wawili mpaka sasa hivi*).” Leila’s strongest concern, however, was about two major issues, namely, the partner’s failure to provide for her at that critical moment, and his uncertainty as to whether he was actually responsible for the pregnancy, while she was pretty sure about it. The situation for her was quite humiliating and embarrassing. Illuminating her concerns Leila recounted,

You see he decided to stop providing for me (*hanihudumii*) and he started telling my fellows (*wenzangu*), that ‘I have accepted the pregnancy but it is like I am not the only one responsible (*mimi mimba nimeikubali ila naona kama sio yangu peke yangu*).’ So I decided to exclude myself (*nikaamua kususa*), I told him that if that is the case just leave it for me (*basi niachie tu mwenyewe*), since then he hasn’t come here neither have I gone to his home.

It was not difficult for me to observe the changes that Leila presented in terms of appearance. She was less concerned with make-up and dressing style, even keeping herself smart. In short, she looked very unkempt, a situation that persisted until she gave birth. From the perspective of her peers, Leila temporarily “went off the chart” (*ametoka kwenye chati*), a state that one can gain, loose and regain. I return to this point later when I wind up the portrait. Leila continued with multiple sexual partnerships during the early months of her pregnancy, as she noted later, “when the pregnancy becomes visible you are not attractive to men anymore (...) so I used to get some few cents (*unapatapata visent kidogo*) from them but no one helped me later on.”

However, wanting to know whether Leila was ready to make an effort to reconcile with her partner so as to regain the support from him, Leila remarked, “so that he sees me as destitute (*anione nina dhiki sana*)? (...) I will stay with my hardships (*nitakaa na shida zangu*).” Here Leila is reflecting on and pointing to her concern with the sense of dignity and social worth in its strongest sense. What is at issue here is therefore not simply the

material support, but her sense of being and belonging. The same was manifested when I wanted to know whether at any point in her relationship she had thought about proposing marriage to a partner. In this respect she responded with a question, “what if he rejects the proposal (*akikataa je*)?”

Apparently, the problem was not simply pregnancy as a vital event, but how she got it and what transpired at the level of the sexual relationship, or as she said, “I feel bad that he impregnates and betrays me (*najisikia vibaya kama hivi ananipa ujauzito na ananisaliti*).” Inter-subjectively, Leila was also feeling bad for having to beg for everything, “including soap” (as she says) from her mother and sister. This suggests that it is somehow not right for her to be asking for such items from parents.

Taking into account the fact that she was using contraceptives, it can plausibly be maintained that the pregnancy was “unwanted”. How did it then come about and what actions did Leila enact when she realized that she was pregnant. These are the points to which I now turn.

#### ***Ciba<sup>108</sup>: contra-contraceptives***

In response to my question on how she got pregnant while she was on contraceptives, Leila said, “it was simply bad luck (*ilitokea tu kama bahati mbaya*), I was taking contraceptive injections (*nilikuwa natumia sindano hizi za kuzuia mimba*).” She further explained that she was taking the dose once every three months, as advised by the providers of family planning services at one of the health facilities in Mtwara Town. The immediate explanation from the expert’s perspective is that Leila did not strictly observe the three-month interval for taking the injections. This is in keeping with the expectations, since the injection is also considered to be one of the most efficient of all contraceptives.

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<sup>108</sup> Ciba is an abbreviation for Chemische Industrie Basel. It used to be a chemical company based in Basel, Switzerland. The company was reformed as the non-pharmaceuticals section of Novartis in 1997, following the merger the previous year of Ciba-Geigy and Sandoz that created Novartis. However, in 2008, Ciba was acquired by the German chemical company BASF and, in April 2009, integrated into the BASF concern. For details see, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciba\\_Specialty\\_Chemicals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciba_Specialty_Chemicals) (accessed on 11 June 2013)

At variance with the expert view, Leila said, “he (the boyfriend) confirmed to have taken ‘Ciba’ in order to make me pregnant (*amenimezea Ciba*).” What quickly came to my mind at that point was that Ciba could be a “local” or Chinese traditional medicine, because I had heard about the use of certain herbs to facilitate conception. However, Leila clarified that, Ciba in this case referred to a type of pill that men were using to make their wives or partners pregnant. To be sure, it is the man who takes the pills before sexual intercourse on the understanding that the medicine would merge with his sperm to defeat the contraceptive the woman was taking.

To understand why the drug is called Ciba, I talked to several boys who also confirmed that they knew about the medicine and its power to weaken contraceptives. Above all, they told me that Ciba was available in the medical stores in Mtwara Town. From the three pharmacies I visited asking for Ciba I was told that it an anti-tuberculosis drug called *Rifampicin*. I also learnt that Ciba was one of the pharmaceutical companies based in Basel, Switzerland. Thus, it was apparent that in the context of my informants, the drug was named after the trade mark/brand name on the package. Conversations with family planning practitioners acknowledged that the drug can lead to what biomedical science calls *drug interactions*, especially if taken by women using oral contraceptives (see for example, Addington 1979, Baciewicz 1984, Shenfield 1993). Therefore the practitioners relegated to the realm of *misconceptions* and *myths* the widespread understanding that the same effects can be observed when the drug is taken by men.

Whether the pregnancy of Leila was a result of Ciba or not, is not important for the point I want to make here. But I am trying to pinpoint the conditions that made Ciba an “object” of intention for Leila’s boyfriend and other men in Mtwara Town in relation to increased family planning interventions.<sup>109</sup> As a corollary, what does Ciba mean for the efforts of girls like Leila and other women towards avoiding “unwanted” pregnancy? These are open empirical questions.

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<sup>109</sup> A closer examination of DHS over the past five decades shows a tremendous increase of the proportion of women who had ever used modern contraception in Southern Zone (including Mtwara) from 13% in 1991 to 56% in 2004. Likewise, current use of contraceptives increased steadily from one survey to the next: from 4% to 14% to 19% to 28% to 36% in 2010 (NBS and ORC Macro 2005, NBS and Macro International Inc 2006, NBS and ICF Macro 2011).

### *The exertions of Leila against unwanted pregnancy*

Given the uncertainties that surrounded her third pregnancy, Leila kept it secret, not just for her boyfriend but also from her mother and other people. But she opened up to her friends so that they would assist her in her attempt to terminate the pregnancy. Her intention to abort is very clear in her accounts of the steps she enacted. In this respect, Leila says, “I tried to abort in vain (*nilijaribu kutoa ikashindikana*).” Unlike Asha, Sharobaro’s girlfriend in portrait 7.3, Leila could not afford to consult a doctor but tried what she refers to as “traditional ways (*njia za kienyeji*)”. As we shall see, the materiality of these methods crisscrosses the realm of traditional and modern.

Leila first went for another contraceptive injection knowing that she was already pregnant (*nikajichoma tena wakati nina mimba*), she then took contraceptive pills (*nikameza vidonge hivi vya majira vya kuzuia mimba vyekundu*). These never worked, she was then advised by a friend to try laundry detergent, popularly known as “blue” (*anikajaribu kunywa blue (...) za kufulia nguo*). Again, this did not help. She got another suggestion to drink a solution of hot ashes (*wananiambia koroga jivu la moto*), which did not work either. Perhaps close to the hot ashes was the solution of the match (*zile njiti za kiberiti unazitumbukiza kwenye maji*), which also failed (see also Bangser 2010).<sup>110</sup>

In the end, none of the methods worked (*ikashindikana*) for Leila. From the perspective of her peers, there was an explanation for that, as she noted, “my friends told me that they had used one of those methods and they succeeded to abort but for me, they said I delayed (*nimechelewa*), I was supposed to time it during the first month (*ungejaribu ina mwezi mmoja ingeweza ikakusaidia kutoka*).” Finally, Leila decided to disclose to her boyfriend that she was pregnant, when the pregnancy was in its eighth week (*nilivyoona nafika miezi miwili nikamwambia*). This is when he confirmed to have taken Ciba in order to make her pregnant, and added that it would not be easy for her to abort (*amenimezea vidonge kwamba haitaweza kutoka*). Still wishing to abort, Leila asked her boyfriend to provide her with at least twenty thousand Tanzania Shillings (about thirteen US dollars) so that she could raise the fee for an abortion. Unfortunately, the boyfriend

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<sup>110</sup> For a detailed ethnographic discussion on the practices of induced abortion among adolescents in Tanzania, see Plummer et al. (2008) *Aborting and Suspending Pregnancy in Rural Tanzania: Ethnography of Young People’s Beliefs and Practices*.

did not support her. At this point, Leila had to accept the situation and opened up to her mother.

### *The coming of a third child*

When I returned to the field a year later, things had changed in Leila's sexual formation. Whereas the onset of her third pregnancy culminated in the break-up of her sexual partnership, the coming of her third child rejuvenated the relationship. According to Leila, few weeks after giving birth, some people in the neighbourhood leaked the information to the parents of her boyfriend.

Because the boyfriend had concealed the relationship, the parents were unaware until when the news was delivered by one of the neighbours. Then his father asked him to confirm the news, but the boyfriend denied knowing Leila (*simjui*). The father sent his mother off to Leila's family to explore more about the baby. When Leila was asked by her boyfriend's mother, she confirmed, "it is his child (*mototo ni wa kwake*).” The mother promised Leila that they would take care of her and the baby. The parents also asked her to frequently bring the baby to their home and that is what she did, "I was spending the day there and come back home in the evening (*naenda nakaa jioni narudi*).” Even then the boyfriend would not interact with her as she aptly put it, "whenever I arrived at his home, he immediately left and he did not even want to touch the baby (*nikienda pale yule mwanaume anatoka hataki hata kumshika mototo*).”

But the situation changed over time as Leila noted, "this did not take longer before he started to hold the child and come to my home, and often left me with some coins (*akiokota visenti ananiachia*).” At the moment, she added, "he has completely accepted (*sasa hivi amekubali kabisa*).” The immediate question is whether it was just the push from his parents and Leila's presence at his home that convinced the boyfriend to finally accept the baby and renew their relationship. To this Leila said, "apart from the parents I think he has also observed that I am *back to the chart* and, I can apply lipstick and make it stick (*nikipaka wanja unakaaa*).” Indeed, Leila was again concerned with her appearance, applied make-up and looked very smart and cute.

On whether the two reflect on the turbulent past which led to their temporal break up, Leila confirmed that she had asked him why he had abandoned her. According to her, the boyfriend reiterated his accusation that she was cheating on him (*kunizingua*). He claimed that whenever he came to Leila's place at night, he met other men (*wanaume wengine*). In addition, he noted that when he was passing by the streets (*akipita mitaani*), other people would tell him that he was not the father of Leila's child, but some other man whom he knew. That is why he was not certain (*nikasita*). It was in my interest to learn from Leila whether the accusations were watertight or unfounded.

With a confirming laughter, Leila said, "it was true but the pregnancy did not belong to the other man (*ilikuwa kweli lakini ujauzito haukuwa wake*).” Pointing to the other boyfriend, she added:

(...) he was my former boyfriend before I met the current one (*kabla ya huyu*). But people told him (the father of the child) but the truth is that at some point I used to meet the former boyfriend less often (*mara moja moja*) and I was more into the new one (*nikajichanganya na huyu*). So I just knew for sure that the pregnancy was not from the former boyfriend...

The above passage hints at one of the reasons for the adolescent's endeavour to conceal sexual relationships and activities. Although she managed to handle her sexual activities so well that the two partners never actually met, she failed to conceal the partnerships from each of the two partners and the other people. This cost her rejection and produced tension as to the identity of the child's actual father. Inasmuch as she is sure about the real father, Leila has constantly faced complaints and claims from her former boyfriend that he is the father of the child (*analalamika mpaka leo anasema mtoto ni wake*).

Finally, reminiscing on her previous frustrations and claims that she would not accept her boyfriend's apology, even after delivery, Leila manifests the dynamic nature of intentions. Clearly she points out her judgment that, "I considered (*nimeangalia*) and came to see that I would be overwhelmed by life (*maisha yatanishinda*)". Here, she is referring to the worsening living conditions at her home and that she had to shoulder the burden of child rearing. Thus, the proposal by her boyfriend's parents opened up a

new opportunity for support in child rearing while, at the same time, helping her family.

Yet still, cohabitation for Leila is not geared towards marriage even though the latter could be part of the horizon, as she sums up inline with the second opening quote for this section,

I am buying time to see that my child grows (*mototo akue*), then I will see how the the man himself (*mwanaume mwenyewe*) fares (...) because now he is not doing anything we are being fed by his parents, (...) I have another child who lives with my mother. I will convince him to find a job so that when gets money and I can also have some to provide for my other child. In case he won't agree with me (*kama hatakubali*), I will see to it when his child get waened, I will tell him hey Mr (*bwana wewe*), let me look around for another way of life (*ngoja niangalie maisha mengine*)

Therefore, for Leila, this form of sexual relationship has to provide her with opportunities to deal with concrete life situations. Above all, it is not simply a question of affection and love but more about the ability to accomplish social roles and command social respectability.

#### **6.4 Sexual relationships of adolescent mothers living with parents/guardians**

Viewed from the unfashionable social and cultural deterministic perspective grounded in the lifecycle model, a girl who has started child bearing becomes a woman. This would suggest that *amekua mtu mzima* (has become an adult) and that, to a certain extent, was no longer under the control of parents. Although this is actually true in some cases like that of Leila (see portrait 6.5), the everyday experiences of other adolescent mothers present different realities that I find interesting to explore here. As noted earlier, adolescents' sexual and reproductive life-ways manifest diverse ways of articulating social differences and pursuing individual interests or aspirations. As a result, a similar event like pregnancy happening to different young girls in different concrete life conditions can invoke different experiences on the part of the actors. Equally important, even for adolescents living in similar social environments, each may perceive and experience pregnancy and motherhood in her own way. If that is not enough, the same adolescent mother can present varied images as she confronts different situations.

To understand these dynamics it is imperative to situate the experiences of the adolescents in their social contexts and, by extension, to grasp their personal desires and social aspirations. Inasmuch as pregnancy and motherhood constitute turning points, critical moments and vital conjunctures, the female adolescents in question, along with other actors, actively strive to “turn the points”, to “criticize the moments” and to “vitalize the conjunctures”, respectively. Most of the aspects characterizing the sexual partnerships that I address in this section surface in the form of sexual relationships described earlier. However, different forms of parental control of adolescents who have commenced with child bearing and how the adolescents experience and engage with such social ties along with their sexual relationships are further examined in this section.

In Mtwara Town, most of the adolescent mothers, with a few exceptions like Leila (see portrait 6.5), had their first child with a partner who was not known to parents before the pregnancy. One thing that ought to be noted here is that most boys do not want the parents of their girlfriends to know that they are dating their daughters. Among other reasons, as reiterated before, the boys wish to avoid being implicated when a girl gets pregnant. Usually after a few months of pregnancy, though it could go up to six months without being recognized, as in the case of Asia’s sister, the girl is forced to give the parents the name of the man responsible. Again, some of the boys accept this, others do not.

There are also situations where the boyfriend agrees with the pregnant girlfriend not to tell her parents for the sake of his future, especially if the girl is still schooling (the boy can be sentenced to jail). In such situations, the boyfriend promises that he will take over responsibility during and after pregnancy but, of course, in secrecy. Accordingly, girls would make up stories that the responsible man is not in town, telling parents that he had left to a distant place like Dar es Salaam, the largest city in Tanzania, or even to Mozambique. This is even much easier today because there are many newcomers/migrants in Mtwara Town from other parts of the region or country, as well as from outside Tanzania. These include students in the mushrooming education institutions, employees in companies dealing with oil and gas (Malkia’s boyfriend),



government officials (one of Habiba's partner, portrait 7.2) and businessmen (see Leila's first boyfriend portrait 6.5).

In other cases, however, boys/men who happen to impregnate a girl but leave town for some reason can still maintain contact with the respective girl. For instance, one of my informants, Mwanaisha (seventeen years) was impregnated by a boy from Arusha, a city in Northern Tanzania. The two were studying at the vocational training college based in Mtwara. But by the time she realized that she was pregnant, the boy had finished his studies and gone back to Arusha.

Fortunately, the two maintained regular communication through mobile phones. Mwanaisha was living with her aunt, a sister to her late father. Upon disclosing her pregnancy, the aunt obliged her to reveal the man responsible. Mwanaisha called the boyfriend and asked him to speak to her aunt. He accepted and passed the aunt on to his own mother. The young couple got married a year later. In my conversations with Mwanaisha's aunt, *bibi* Matone, an elderly woman in her late sixties, she was proud that it had worked out more successfully than anticipated. She also pointed to the fact that she did not consider Mwanaisha an adult, even after she had become a mother. Instead, she even strengthened her control over Mwanaisha's social interactions and movements until she joined her husband.

So, what becomes somewhat clear here is that at the onset of pregnancy or birth, some of the adolescents' sexual relationships break up, but others persist a few even ending in marriage. Beside other aspirations, many girls aspire for marriage with the father of their children (*baba watoto*) in order to share the burden of child rearing, especially when the boyfriend has the means to provide for them and their children. As shown in the portraits later, this aspiration is rarely achieved, for various reasons.

As a matter of principle, interactions with father of the child, while at home, are not approved of by parents until the boyfriend submits the famous letter of engagement (*barua ya uchumba*) to the girl's parents. Specifically, he is not allowed to visit the

girlfriend at home. Many girls observe this, with few exceptions. Of course, the boyfriend can sneak in at times when the girlfriend informs him via mobile phone that her parents are not around. Quite often, they interact via mobile phone and arrange to meet in other places as I discuss in the next chapter.

To be able to commit the partner to support child rearing, the teenage mother may be allowed to frequent the home of her boyfriend. This is done in the name of sending a grandchild to its grandparents (*kumpeleka mjukuu*), that is, the parents of the boyfriend. In other words, her parents may encourage the teenage mother to send the grandchildren to their fellow parents who may or may not have intervened in committing the boyfriend to their daughter's pregnancy. It can also be argued that the parents in question may agree to the visits, in anticipation that the two young people are likely to marry. Whatever the case, the situation unquestionably opens up opportunities for the girl to justify visits to her boyfriend.

To further understand this practice, it is important to put it in a wider perspective, namely, that despite rapid cultural change in Mtwara Town, children are still valued by the parental generation. Having children is regarded as a responsibility (*wajibu*) from a religious point of view, and socially, if one does not have children one is regarded as *fukara*, meaning poor and destitute with nobody to continue your bloodline after death.

At the level of the adolescent mother and father's sexual relationship, things may or may not remain the same. For instance, it is common for boys to look for new sexual partners when their girlfriends are pregnant and/or breast-feeding. This is partly because of the need for the girls to abstain, but also the practical fact that pregnancy and breast-feeding deny most of the girls the opportunity to maintain their attractiveness and attention from the boyfriends. Most of my informants confirmed that they abstained from sex during breast-feeding (*ninalea*). Indeed, this is reported to be a long-lasting tradition, it being a taboo to have sex (*kufanya mapenzi*) with the wife at certain stages of the pregnancy and throughout the period of breast-feeding (see also Liebenow 1971).

Apparently, in the past, polygamous marriage practices enabled men to cope with the hassles of having to abstain for two years. From a detailed conversation with some elderly people in Mikindani, it was indicative that the tradition also demanded women to be less jealous towards their husbands and to allow men who were in monogamous marriages to have affairs with other women. Even though this is not necessarily the case today, it sheds light on the inter-subjective logic for my informant's tolerance of being cheated on by their boyfriends, especially during breast-feeding. It also echoes a common imaginary that men lack sexual humility (*wanaume sio wavumilivu*), hence they must be excused for failing to withstand longer periods of abstinence. This is indeed another point to which I turn later in the next chapter.

Likewise, some of the teenage mothers develop new or revive old sexual relationships with other partners for various reasons. Contingencies about the commitment of the boyfriend who is at the same time the father to one's child, is one reason, conflicts leading to break-up are another. Equally important could be the failure of the current partner to satisfy the demands of the adolescent mother, in terms of affection, costs related to child rearing and her own basic or other needs.

While some of the teenage mothers can enact a further monogamous relationship, many others resort to multiple sexual partnerships as explained in the first and second typologies of the forms of sexual partnership in the present chapter. Regardless of their responsive engagements, they all have to actively deal with multiple social expectations, uncertainties and challenges. For instance, the decision to enter into concurrent sexual partnerships may demand that one has to not only hide the new sexual activities from one's parents, but also from the father of her child, especially when they are still on good terms. Depending on the type of partnership that a woman enacts with her new partner, she may or may not need to conceal her other sexual relationships from the new sexual partner(s). For example, if a teenage mother resumes an old sexual relationship, that is, one which existed prior to dating the current partner, it means that the old partner is aware of her current sexual relationship, and, by extension, that he accepts that one but

may not accept another new relationship. To illustrate the diversity, I present and draw from three portraits of informants with different experiences.

***Aisha: when sexuality discourses clash with lived experiences (portrait 6.6)***

This vignette is selected to illuminate the different ways through which adolescent mothers can move between and within social positions by selecting, combining and rejecting certain aspects from the existing multiple sexual and reproductive discourses. In particular, the portrait shows the possibilities for adolescents to move temporarily between and within the realms of peer and parental sexual scripts. It also points to the fact that the mentioned movements can be traced either discursively or in their social practices, or both.

Aisha is a nineteen-year-old teenage mother who claims to be a Muslim. She has completed primary education and lives with her aunt. Aisha appreciates her aunt's care and support for her and the baby. In return, she feels obliged to observe the restrictions set by the aunt. For instance, Aisha confirmed that her aunt would not be happy if she came home late at night and she did not want to disappoint her, or as she puts it, "the latest time I can be away from home is between 6 and 8 pm."

As regards her sexual relationships, Aisha has a boyfriend, but he is not the father of her baby. She confirms to have broken up with the father of her child as she notes, "we threw each other long ago (*tulishamwagana zamani*)."

This expression connotes that each of the two actors in the relationship both had a stake in terminating the partnership. This is different from situations where one claims to have been thrown out or abandoned (*kumwagwa* or *kuachwa*) as depicted earlier in the case of Malkia's termination of her first relationship.

According to Aisha, the boyfriend whom she really loved cheated on her with another girl and he was no longer committed to her when she was pregnant. This also reflects the fact that moments of pregnancy and childbirth can be turbulent for the sexual relationship. Yet still, adolescents faced with such situations are forced to reflect on the

relationship and imagine new possibilities. For instance, breaking up with the father of her child could also mean less support from him in terms of child-rearing, hence more reliance on her aunt. In response to the circumstances, Aisha entered into another sexual partnership besides trying to comply with her aunt's restrictions.

Interestingly, in all of our visits to Aisha's home, she appeared in either a *khanga* or a long skirt and blouse (top). She also covered her hair with a *shungi* or *baibui*, more or less typical of the coastal Swahili dress for girls and women. For Aisha, the costume mirrors Islamic values though this is not necessarily the case for many other girls and women in Mtwara Town.<sup>111</sup> In any case, she considers herself to have been raised according to strict morals and was not allowed to dress in what she refers to as strange dresses (*mavazi ya ajabuajabu*).

Affirming her difference from other girls, Aisha subjectively positions herself in relation to the moral, traditional and religious discourses concerning the proper dress code for a woman. Specifically, she remarks that, "I don't want my daughter to be like girls of today (*sitaki awe kama wasichana wa sasa*)."

In addition she condemns parents who allow their daughters to display their bodies in trendy dresses. Thus, based on her judgement of the valued attire, Aisha aspires to control her baby when she grows up. This not only allows her to imagine her future role as the mother of a teenage daughter, it also enables her to make sense of, and comply, with her aunt's restrictions.

Recasting her past experiences, she considers herself to have escaped wicked adolescence (*ujana wa kijinga*). This is because as soon as she started to indulge in what she calls adolescence games (*kuanza kucheza*) such as hanging out with boyfriends and displaying fashionable dresses, she was stopped by a pregnancy (*wakanituliza na mimba*). Surprisingly, Aisha does not attribute her experience of missing the opportunity to stage the "naughty" dimension of adolescence to the strict parental moral guidance, but to the pregnancy as the vital conjuncture. Inasmuch as she does not regret missing adolescence

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<sup>111</sup> It was common for non-Muslim women and girls to dress in the same style. For them that is part of the traditional dress code. This nicely hints to the limitation of the dominant dichotomy of traditional versus modern.

because she now feels socially grown up, she is implicitly showing how she was able to circumvent the *strict* morals and parental restrictions in order to engage in sexual activities. At the same time, the pregnancy provides Aisha with the basis upon which she justifies her current sexual practices as an “adult” woman, different from what she refers to as “adolescent girls of today”.

Like many other girls, regardless of whether they are mothers or not, Aisha alludes to the imaginary that marriage offers possibilities for a better life. Apart from aspiring for social respectability, she is also longing to break away from parental control. Aisha aptly puts it, “I wish to get married, live in my own household (*nikae kwangu*) and be respected (*niheshimike*).” Despite these clear intentions, she is not sure of her current boyfriend in terms of marriage prospects. Like Leila in portrait 6.5, she does not even want to discuss the issue of marriage with the partner.

Importantly, the actor (Aisha) is aware of the challenges and uncertainties in her everyday life, including child-rearing and her sexual relationship. In response to such contingencies, she maintains her positive image towards the parent. At the same time she hopes that her marriage prospects will come true in future. The uncertainty towards actualizing the aspired marital project could both be ingrained in the experience with her first boyfriend but also how she judges the present sexual partnership.

Overall, Aisha is carefully selecting, combining and rejecting different dimensions of the seemingly hegemonic moral discourses to suit her situations. For instance, whereas the discourses against what she refers to as “strange dress styles”, from which she draws, forbid her to engage in premarital sexual relationships, she immediately entered into a new partnership after breaking up with her former boyfriend. Like many other girls, Aisha justifies her sexual chastity by both restricting herself to a monogamous partnership and concealing the latter. Towards the parental sexual scripts, the actor displays discipline (*nidhamu or adabu*) in her dress styles, observing the prescribed patterns and routines.

***Zuena: getting tired of living with parents (portrait 6.7)***

In this portrait, I intend to depict that despite the dependence of adolescents on their parents, it is not always in the interest of the former to remain under the surveillance of the latter. Likewise, the portrait shows that, while the attractiveness of the imagined alternative life outside the control of parents can be powerful during adolescence, the seemingly immature adolescents strive to strike a balance and deal with their present situations without losing track of their aspired futures.

Zuena is a teenage mother, eighteen years old, and has completed primary education. Unlike Aisha in the previous portrait (6.6), she lives with both her own father and mother. Zuena contextualizes her attire: while at home, she dresses up in *khanga* and when going out she puts on a veil (*mtandio*) or *khanga* to cover up her head. Even after pregnancy she considers herself to be cute and as she puts it, “I attract people when I appear in my garments (*nikivaa napendeza na kuwavutia watu*)”.

Zuena maintains that she depends on her parents for basic needs and they strive to provide for her and her child. Because of that, Zuena loves (*nawapenda*) her parents and she diligently engages in domestic chores to help her mother. The parental support and assurance of basic needs, especially food and shelter, are central to her everyday life. But, for clothing, make-up and other “items of modernity” such as mobile phones, airtime and cosmetics, she depends on her boyfriend, the father of her child. In this respect Zuena noted that, “he provides whatever I need (*ninachotaka ananipa*).” The partner is also providing for the major costs related to child-rearing. In return, she strives to satisfy her partner with what she calls nice stuff (*mambo mazuri*) which, according to her, includes romantic expressions and sexual intercourse.

During our sixth visit to Zuena’s home, she explicitly claimed that, “I am getting tired of living with parents (*nimechoka kukaa kwa wazazi*). Instead she wished to set up her own household (*kuwa na kwangu*) with her current partner. Here she is articulating her intention to free herself from parental control. One of the possible ways to attain this is to get married. Even though her current sexual practices are geared towards this end, her parents principally expect Zuena to discipline her premarital sexual activities. To display respect (*heshima*) to her parents, she tries to hide her sexual activities despite the fact that her partnership is known to them, following her pregnancy. This explains her frustrations and the need to set up her own household. Yet still, Zuena simultaneously struggles to maintain the sexual relationship so as to fulfill her marriage prospects and pay homage to

the current support and expectations on the part of her parents. How to strike a balance between *heshima* to the parents and *mambo mazuri* to her partner constitutes challenges and ambiguities that she constantly has to deal with.

It is also important to note that Zuena's reproductive experiences did not translate into conflicts in her sexual partnership, as was the case for others like Aisha (see portrait 6.6) and Leila (portrait 6.5). According to Zuena, this was due to her sexual biography prior to pregnancy. When I tried to dig into her biography, Zuena summarized by saying, "I am not used to have many men – multiple partners (*sijazoea kuwa na wanaume wengi*).” To justify her claim, following my doubts, she said, "that is why my partner did not reject the pregnancy (*ndio maana sikupata tabu ya kukataliwa mamba*).” Although the sexual biography is an important explanation, as we have seen in the case of Leila in portrait 6.5, it is not necessarily the only one. This is because, as noted earlier, boys might reject a pregnancy for many reasons, including fear of handling the responsibility.

Nevertheless, Zuena points to an important dimension of sexuality with regard to adolescent mothers. That is, the decision to enact multiple sexual partnerships draws more from the habitual sphere of their social actions. This means that the actors have to acclimatize themselves and develop some sort of awareness of the rules of the practice in order to gain what Bourdieu, using a sports metaphor, would refer to as "a feel for the game" (1998: 25). While this is critical, it also begs questions as to why and how actors resort to multiple sexual partnerships before they command the practice. To shed light on these issues, I present and discuss the sexual and reproductive pathways of Amina.

***Amina: multiple partnerships as projects with multiple ends (portrait 6.8)***

The portrait of Amina sheds light on different turning points in the sexual and reproductive lives of adolescent mothers. In this case, sexuality is not only linked to sexual desires, emotions, and status, it is also a means to meet economic needs. It is neither motivated by purely economic circumstances (as the poverty discourse would argue (see for example Nnko and Pool, 1997) nor is it devoid of the economic dimensions of the adolescents' everyday life. Rather, it is geared towards multiple ends and projects (see also Wamoyi et al 2011a). The portrait points to the shifts in social expectations and engagements that an adolescent mother may experience after the onset of pregnancy and, later, birth. The latter can be transformed into a space for managing one's sexual life with



limited control from parents. The experience of Amina is not unique, but one among many in Mtwara Town and elsewhere in Tanzania.<sup>112</sup>

Amina is another nineteen-year-old adolescent mother living with her own mother whom she refers to as *mama wa ukweli* (real mother, as opposed to step mother) and her *baba mlezi* (stepfather). She has more attachment to the stepfather than to her own father because he (stepfather) raised her from childhood and supported her primary education. In addition, the stepfather did not disown her when she got pregnant, contrary to her expectations, and on top of that, he loves her child. This shows that she anticipated possible problematic situations, perhaps based on the experiences of friends and relatives.

That everything turned out in her favour could be explained by the potential influence of her mother in the household decision-making process. Here I am cautiously taking advantage of the fact that the Makonde, the main ethnic group in Mtwara Town, despite social transformation, have retained some matrilineal elements.<sup>113</sup> Unlike in the previous cases of adolescent mothers, Amina says that no one bothers when she goes out and comes back. Recasting her previous situation, she thinks that this is because her parents now know that she has become an adult (*mtu mzima*), which also means that one can no longer expect certain provisions from parents.

So for Amina, adolescent motherhood opened up space for her to claim some sort of autonomy in managing her life. In addition, she also attributes the situation to the pragmatic fact that she does not bother her parents to open the door for her at night. This is because her room is separate from the main house. At times Amina spends the night with partners outside home. However, she singles out that, “to bring sexual partners home (*nyumbani*)” is sign of being disrespectful to parents, hence it represents bad manners (*tabia mbaya*). Thus she is still concerned with showing some respect to her parents. For

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<sup>112</sup> For an overview of young women’s engagements that brings together their sexual encounters and concrete basic and other social needs, see Mgalla and Pool (1999), Haram (2001, 2004), Wamoyi et al. (2010).

<sup>113</sup> Most adolescents confirmed that it was easier to circumvent the mother’s than the father’s restrictions, but also easier to share certain secrets, especially for girls. Of course there were few exceptions such as Malkia’s mother. Additionally, in the discussions with male parents, the latter blamed the female parents for the “misconduct” of their daughters.

that reason, she never dared to bring a sexual partner to her room despite that the latter is isolated from the main house.

*Multiple partners as customers: agents or victims?*

Just like Aisha (portrait 6.6), Amina's sexual partnership with the father of her child broke up a few months after delivery. Unlike Aisha, who launched another monogamous relationship, Amina enacted multiple partnerships. Apparently the arrival of the baby ushered in significant changes in her sexual formation. Until our final visit to her home, Amina had two boyfriends whom she considered as wholesale customers (*wateja wa jumla*). The two are regarded as relatively stable partnerships. Along with the two, she has many other casual partners whom she refers to as retail customers (*wateja wa rejareja*). The latter are also called *mabuzi wakuchuna* (goats to be skinned/remove skin off), meaning partners from whom one draws/drains money, a practice popular known in Tanzania as "skinning the goat" (Maganja et al. 2007: 974).

Questioning the logic behind the business analogy requires going beyond the conventional discourses of transactional sex and prostitution or commercial sex (in fashionable terms) discourses. For instance, I was told by several informants, both adolescents and parents, about the shop (*duka*) metaphor, closely linked to the above business analogy (cf. Wamoyi 2011). The metaphor is used by some of the female parents in moments when their daughters, having reached puberty (*mwali*), confront them with requests for the provision of essential needs. The latter include clothing, school items and, lately, items of modernity such as mobile phones. Coupled with the inability to afford such things, one of the parents remarked, "some mothers would tell their daughter that begetting you as a woman, I have given you a shop (*kukuzaa mwanamke nimekupa duka*) so (...) you are also a woman, you should fend for yourself (*na wewe ni mwanamke jitafutie*)."

The above implies that sex is a valuable commodity and, by extension, it is justifiable for a woman to earn or get compensated, hence men have to pay for it (see also Haram 2004, Wamoyi et al. 2010, 2011, Kaufman and Stavrou 2004). The phenomenon should not be

mistakenly confused with commercial sex or prostitution, and even though it could qualify as such, its emic expressions transcends the logic of mere economic transactions to encompass what Haram (2004) has referred to as female agency. This is also vivid in the case of Amina, as I show later.

Although the “shop” metaphor is unpopular at a discursive level in Mtwara Town, it is very common in practice. For instance, few parents would ask questions when a daughter without any source of income appears in a new dress, or brings home sugar, bread, bites and burns (*chapati*) for breakfast.<sup>114</sup> Of course, even for those who do query, there is always an explanation, commonly involving a gift from a relative or a friend. In many other cases, parents would even ask their daughters for bites, airtime and drinks, among other things. Yet, the parents would also expect the girls to discipline their sexual activities, at least to some extent. This may help to explain Amina’s practice of spending nights with partners while her mother took care of the child.

Amina considers that, “for girls of today (*wasichana wa sasa*) it is fashionable to have multiple sexual partners (...), you see, you can’t meet all your needs by relying on one partner.” In this sense, at least in her current situation, multiple partnerships constitute a necessity in her life, one that is geared towards extracting resources to meet her needs. According to Amina, most of her friends also have multiple partners (*tunaelewana mambo yetu*). In this situation, she draws from the routinized trends in the current sexual affairs among her own peers. On one of our visits to Amina’s home, one of her friends showed up in the middle of our conversation. Amina asked us to allow her to chat with the friend for a moment. The main topic was Amina’s experience from the previous night. The conversation went as follows,

Friend: tell me my dear! (*niambie shost !*)

Amina: when we parted yesterday, I met a customer... (*jana tulipoachana nilipata mteja ...*)

Friend: tell me what happened... did you strike a deal? (*niambie*

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<sup>114</sup> This should also take into account the fact that there are girls like Asia who engage in small business, Malkia (shopkeeper) and Anna (casual worker in a cashew nut company). For such girls, it is easy to justify a new dress or even a mobile phone, even when it is a gift from a partner. In other situations, adolescents contribute more to the household budget through their business, hence overshadow their adolescence and justify social adulthood, at least temporarily.

*ilikuwaje...alikuwa na dili?)*  
Amina: first I took a lot of his beer...before we went to sleep in the guest house! (*kwanza nilimnywea pombe zake kinoma..halafu tukaenda kulala guest!*)  
Friend: So when did you go back home? (*kwa hiyo ulirudi home mida gani?*)  
Amina: My dear I spent the whole night there...in the morning he gave what is mine and I left! (*shost sinilala mpaka asubuhi...akanikatia changu nikasepa!*)  
Friend: You are a naughty child/girl...so how much did you milk? (*we mototo noma..kwa hiyo ulikamua ngapi?*)  
Amina: he let me go away with thirty thousands (TZS) ...I couldn't believe my eyes...and he even wanted me to spend the day with him....but I lied to him that I have a sick child...(*alinitoa na elfu thelisini...sikuamini macho yangu...na alitaka nikae naye siku nzima..nikamdanganya mototo anaumwa...*)

Going by the above conversation, Amina creatively engages in the economic sphere of her “customers”. At least from her point of view, she does not feel sexually exploited as one could over-hastily conclude from the structural perspective. Practically, she meets with her casual partners, spontaneously on the street, in a bar or at a club. From a partner she expects her needs to be met (*anitekelezee shida zangu*). This also explains why she prefers going out to discos and clubs serving alcohol. Concretely, multiple partnerships provide Amina with resources to meet the needs that are no longer covered by parents and cannot be satisfied by “wholesale customers”. In this case, sexuality is not only linked to sexual desires, emotions, and status but is also a means towards different projects of the actor.

For instance, Amina further justifies her multiple partnerships by relating to the claim that there is no trust among lovers today. Even in the case of the one she loves, Amina has doubts, saying, “I know I am not alone (*najua siko peke yangu*)”. Thus, she is aware that the boyfriend could be cheating on her, only she has no confirmation. In this sense, multiple partnership is a way to cope with the potential of being cheated on, referring to her previous experiences, which she believes to be a common practice.

Interestingly, Amina is committed to keeping the two partners and making one of them an important backup in case of pregnancy. An important point here is that, along with the

adolescents' effort to conceal their relationships from parents and partners, in case of multiple partnerships, it is also in their interest that a particular partner is known by "*others (kujulikana kwa watu)*." Based on discussions with young people and parents, the *others* may include: peers, selected relatives and neighbours. In some cases, it can also include mothers. The idea is to count on their witness and pressure in case the partner tries to reject the pregnancy. But what is intriguing here is that despite being known to the *others*, relationships that are "not meant" to be known to parents can still be concealed. How this is possible is a point that I have addressed in chapter five and I will further expand on it in the next chapters.

Important to note, Amina positively judges girls with only one boyfriend as *wametulia*. She knows and admires them but believes that she is somehow different to them. Yet, what she finds necessary and vital is to carefully handle the various partners in order to avoid *kugonganisha* (collision of partners). Keeping secret, hiding and making each of them think he is the only one, is her major preoccupation. This enables the actor to both continue benefiting from multiple sexual partnerships and avoiding the dangers of collision, including shame and disgrace. On how actors like Amina go about maintaining secrecy and dealing with situations where collisions occur, see chapters seven and eight.

## 6.5 Married and cohabiting (*mume na mke*)

While many adolescent boys in Mtwara Town put less emphasis on marriage prospects, most adolescent girls aspire for marriage. This confirms the common tendency that early marriage is relatively less common among boys compared to their female counterparts (see Clerk 2004, UNICEF 2011). As reiterated in the previous sections, adolescent girls aspire to get married not simply for social status reasons but also because it offers the opportunity to enjoy some kind of autonomy as well as a better life. But the actors have clear images of the type of marriage they want. So these girls do not just enter into marriage aimlessly or simply as a rite of passage to adulthood, as misrepresented in some essentialist views (see, for example, Jensen and Thornton 2003). For them (the girls) it is possible to enter into marriage, move out and re-enter into the social institution. So what matters is the realization of one's personal and social aspirations or projects.

### *Kuolewa: girl's longing for a better life*

Fatuma (my field assistant): so Mwanaidi how many boyfriends do you have? (*eti mwanaidi unaboyfriend wangapi?*).

Mwanaidi: I only have the father of my child, I don't need another one, after all I already know that all men are liars (*nina baba watoto wangu tu na hata simtaki mwingine. Nishajua wanaume wenyewe wote waongo*).

Fatuma: why? (*kwanini ?*).

Mwanaidi: even the current one promised to marry me but until today he is just quiet (*hata huyu aliniambia atanioa lakini hadi leo kimya*).

Me: what do you aspire in the current sexual relationship? (*unatamani nini katika mahusiano yako na mpenzi wako kwa sasa?*).

Mwanaidi: I wish my husband (boyfriend) would fulfil his promise to marry me (*natamani mume wangu angetimiza malengo yake akanioa*).

Me: what does he say when you ask him about it? (*ukimuuliza anajibu nini?*).

Mwanaidi: he says nothing... I know he does not intend to marry me (*hajibu wala nini... najua tu hana nia ya kunioa*).

While the above extract from one of the conversation transcripts with research participants shows the aspiration of an adolescent to enter into marriage, her counterparts who are already in marriage consider breaking up from their marriages, as depicted later in the portrait of Wema's marriage. The contradiction hints at the diversity of the

adolescents' sexual formations as well as the tension between aspirations and realities in sexual and reproductive lives of these young people.

The status of being married connotes that an individual has a husband or a wife or wives, in some contexts. Inherent in this connotation are a set of processes and structural prescriptions on how to get married, produce and reproduce a social construct called "marriage" and, by extension, the associated social (matrimonial) practices. It is in the latter where overlapping subjectivity and aspirations of actors involved in the marriage become more evident. Depending on the circumstances, the actors' wishes may or may not be in favour of the prescribed social and cultural constructs, hence the possibilities for transforming the latter. Therefore I look at marriage as a set of social (dis)engagements that are imagined, sought and lived by actors in diverse and dynamic contexts.

In the contexts of Mtwara Town and Tanzania in general, the state of being married invokes gendered notions of *kuoa* (male subjective experiences) and *kuolewa* (female subjective experiences). Each of the two notions articulates certain expectations, aspirations and claims towards the *other* in the social relationship called marriage. On the one hand, *kuoa* induces expectations that the subject, in this case a man/husband (could also be a woman in the case of "female wives" (*nyumba tombo*) practice among the Kuria in Tanzania, see Mhando 2011), accepts the responsibility of providing and caring for the woman/wife and his children.<sup>115</sup> To be able to handle the obligations attached to the role of the husband is not only rewarded with social respectability, but also enhances one's sense of masculinity.

On the other hand, *kuolewa* invokes the expression of being part of the union in which the subject, in this case a woman, has the rights (at least in ideal terms) to be provided for, as long as she also fulfils certain responsibilities, particularly in the intimacy and domestic spheres. The ability to control the domestic sphere along with the realization of

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<sup>115</sup> Marriage has for long been associated with procreation. In some cases pre-matual sex has either been tolerated as long as it did not result in reproduction, or restricted because it was meant to take place with marriage and, by extension, for the purpose of procreation. This topic has for long been a preoccupation of anthropologists studying family and kinship in Africa. See, for example, Schapera (1933), Fortes (1945).

being cared for not only meets the actor's feelings and desires but also elevates her social worth and respectability. Failure triggers moments where the actor can feel dissatisfied, disappointed, ashamed and embarrassed. These provide bases for the actors to engage in reflections on their situations and seek new possibilities.

It is also important to note at this juncture that the ongoing social transformations in Mtwara Town have not left the marriage practices unaffected. For instance, many women are increasingly visible in production circles that used to be the domain of males, at least in principle (see Halley 2012). Longing for the past, the adolescents' parents and grandparents complain about the changing courtship practices in their areas. In particular, they point to the shift from mediated courtships with limited face to face interaction between adolescent boys and girls, to intimate sexual relationships<sup>116</sup> as discussed earlier in this chapter and further detailed in the next chapter. The parents sum up the changes as a move from *kuchaguliwa wachumba* (arranged marriage) to *kuchaguana* (partners agree among themselves to marry). Indeed, what we see is not the absence of courtship and marriage prospects, rather the forms that these practice take entails both *recent* and *previous* reference frames.

Along with the expectations of the parental generations, adolescent boys and girls are much more preoccupied with love, affection, physical structures, beauty and *tabia* (general character) when imagining marriage. As I show in the next chapter, what attract adolescents to a sexual partner and what gives a person reputation among his or her peers is shaped by, and is shaping, many social and cultural contexts. The latter constitute dimensions which crisscross realms of the popular dichotomies such as traditional and modern, local and global.

### ***Routes to marriage***

The present routes to marriage in Mtwara Town predominantly involve parents at some point and draw heavily from the traditions and religious reference frames. But these are combined with current trends observed within Mtwara Town, or outside, through

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<sup>116</sup> See Fuglesang (1994) on similar trends in a coastal town of Lamu in Kenya.



migration and mass media. For instance, it matters a lot for an adolescent girl that the husband did not simply hook up with her on the street or in a nightclub to make her a wife (*hakuniokota njiani au disko*). This again has more to do with their understanding of uncertainties associated with marriage. But also the need to command some respect and avoid being despised and marginalized by the husbands<sup>117</sup>.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of most adolescents, being in a sexual relationship, and often engaging in sexual intercourse, is more or less a common and important step towards marriage. The duration of courtship is much more contingent in the sense that it can be shorter or longer. This depends on the circumstances and situations that characterize the lives of the respective adolescents. Girls, for example, especially when they are not schooling anymore, want to get married once they are convinced that they have found the right suitor (*anayenifaa*), based on their own parameters. Again, it is not just about going for marriage or, as they say, *sio bora kuolewa*, meaning, “it is not just a matter of getting married.” Upon agreement with the partner, parents are consulted through the letter of engagement (*barua ya uchumba*) sent by the male partner through *mshenga* (normally an adult sent to the family where one wants to marry). At times, especially in recent times, the boyfriend himself delivers the letter. In both cases, we see the old custom is embodied in “modern” religious values and demands some form of literacy, yet it has become a standard even for those who cannot read and write. After all, there is always someone who has been to school in current modernizing, urbanizing and globalizing Mtwara Town. Included in the category are the adolescent girls themselves whose education, just like their reproduction, has become a number-one global agenda (see UN 1995, Bearinger et al. 2007, UNICEF 2011, URT 2011).

What was intriguing for me was the relative “autonomy or control” that adolescents enjoyed at this stage of the marriage processes (see also Harries 1944, Liebenow 1971), despite the common discourses that frame them as minors and victims. At this point, they are not just consulted to confirm whether they know and want *kuolewa* (to be married) to

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<sup>117</sup> Although there are other routes to marriage in the town, what is described here is the one which is highly valued at least from the perspective of my informants from all generations (young, parents and grandparents).

the person who has proposed her. They are also asked to state the amount of bride wealth to be paid. Above all, the money is given to her and it is her own money. Of course, being in a prior relationship with the partner proposing, it is common (but not always) to have a prior discussion on and reach an agreement on the amount before staging to the parents. According to the informants, the bride price ranges between TZS 50,000 and 300,000 (about 33 and 150 USD).

In many cases, the money is used for preparations for the *shughuli*, including the purchase of costumes. In situations where the parents are not in a position to mobilize resources for the *shughuli*, the money can also be allocated to cater for that event. But often, as mentioned earlier, the networks of the mother and other guardians would intervene in such a situation. In fact, family members from within and outside town would be invited. That being said, however, I am aware of incidences (in the past) where adolescents were forced into a marriage by parents because a man had provided clandestine gifts or made promises to parents, especially in the past (few incidences still occur). But these practices are more endemic, even today, in areas where the bride price is high and where it goes to the parents, not the girls. Wight et al. 2006 for example, pinpoint such practices among the Sukuma in north-western Tanzania.

Ultimately, an adolescent girl gets married (*ameolewa*). Inasmuch as she switches between and within social positions as wife, woman, and potential mother, if she has not yet started child bearing, this does not mean that she immediately and completely departs from adolescence. In practice, the social categories are flexible and reversible. This makes much sense when examined in relation to the girl's expectations and how the concrete situations unfold in her everyday experiences within the social engagements she enters.

While there are many adolescents who have succeeded in achieving a better life through marriage, it is not uncommon for adolescent girls in Mtwara Town to experience poor living conditions upon getting married. In such situations, certain agentic orientations are triggered. At times they compare the new situation to their previous conditions, such as

the life at home. They also compare themselves with the *others* such as friends and neighbours, not necessarily of their age. In so doing, they bring into play their imagined fortune in marriage and the imaginary of *maisha mazuri* (better life). Building on the pre-established patterned ways of going about such situations by other actors, they try several means, allowing for other possibilities while actively engaging in a web of social ties. For instance, as wives they are expected to reproduce and satisfy their husbands to be able to fulfil their new social position. Still, they do not easily give up the images of being cute and leading a better life.

Furthermore, they also constantly assess the commitment of the husbands with reference to the good times they had during courtship, particularly what attracted them to their partners. Here it is not difficult to find discrepancies, which makes the respective actors re-think or re-define their horizons of hopes and fears. For instance, there was a feeling among my married female informants that they were experiencing negative changes in the *tabia* (general character) of their partners, hence that they would not fear to break off the relationship. Again, such concerns allude to the tension between what is imagined and what the lived experience presents to the actor.

While sexuality was seen as an important aspect of the sexual partnership, some girls feel that, after marriage, it is not important to have sex regularly. Others make excuses when asked for sex by their husbands, but they do comply in moments when the husband insists. Excuses are made with reference to pretended sickness. Another excuse is found in the domestic chores, here girls complain of being tired. To what extent are these tactics different from adult women in marriage is an open empirical question.

However, in the context of marriage, pregnancy becomes normalized. Here it becomes ridiculous to speak about the “problem” of teenage pregnancy (see Chambua et al. 1994). Pregnancy at this juncture is only feared with regard to child spacing and avoiding *kumbemenda mtoto* (stunted growth of the child due to short spacing of the next pregnancy), attached with stigma and *aibu* for both wife and husband.

In addition, married adolescents wish to avoid pregnancy due to *maisha magumu* (life hardship) considering their current living conditions and the nature of the relationship with husbands and others, especially when they are not certain whether they wish to keep up the marriage. These dynamics stand in stark contrast to the dominant health discourse where adolescents are incapable of making so-called “informed decisions”. The lived experiences depict the adolescents in question as actors endowed with the capacity for inter-subjective engagements, leading to situated actions. Illustrative here is the life story of Wema, an adolescent mother, who has been in marriage for one year.

***Wema: the ambivalences of married life (portrait 6.9)***

Wema is currently living with her husband to whom she got married about one and a half years ago. With her husband Wema has a baby boy born in wedlock and she aspires for a baby girl in future. Her husband was her first boyfriend. Reminiscing about her courtship experience, Wema recounts that it was he who saw her at the market the first time and, without her knowing, he followed her in order to find out where she lived.

According to Wema, the boyfriend then observed her movements before he no longer could control himself (*akashindwa kujizuia*). He stopped her when she was leaving a shop and told Wema that he wanted her (*ananitaka*), which means he proposed for the two to have a sexual relationship. Upon his insistent and consistent follow-up they started dating and regularly met for sexual intercourse at his own home. Wema admires the courtship period especially because it was characterized by affection from her partner accompanied by gifts and money. I return to the complexity of courtship practices in chapter seven.

This continued for three months, then the boyfriend submitted *barua ya uchumba* (letter of engagement) to her parents through *mshenga*. She then confirmed to her parents that she was ready for marriage. She pocketed a bride price worth one hundred fifty thousand Tanzania Shillings (about one hundred US dollars). After the marriage ceremony, Wema moved to her husband’s home. In her own assessment she confesses that the current

living conditions in their household are poor, characterized by *kula kwa shida* (unreliability of getting food) on some days.

On top of that, Wema considers that the relationship with her husband is no longer smooth, as she says, “we are not on good terms (*maelewano sio mazuri*).” She feels that her partner has changed his previous good manners (*tabia nzuri*) into what she considers as *tabia mbaya* (bad conduct or manners). Because of that Wema believes that she would not feel bad if he left her today because she is tired of his bad character and, as a result, would not mind splitting up. She also added, “I have even thought about breaking up with him because I am now tired of living with a man, I wish I could live alone (*nimeshawahi kufikiria kuachana nae kwa kuwa sasa hivi nimchoka kukaa na mwanaume natamani niishi peke yangu*).”

Still, Wema takes care of her husband and their child every day, she prepares things for him before he goes to work, cooks nice food for him and by doing so she believes that he cannot leave her. Interestingly enough, Wema still admires *maisha mazuri* (better life) but is not certain how to achieve it in her current situation. Moreover, she considers herself as beautiful young woman, and that requires dressing up nicely (*kuvaa vizuri*) and proper make-up (*kujiremba*) for a woman to retain her beauty. As regards her sexuality, Wema thinks that after marriage having sex regularly is not so important. Consequently, she often pretends to be sick. In addition, Wema was also trying to avoid pregnancy because her child was still young (*mototo bado mdogo*).

## **6.6 Emerging living arrangements for adolescents**

### ***Anna: articulating social adulthood in emerging living arrangements (portrait 6.10)***

The portrait of Anna, a girl of eighteen, intends to show a novel trend in adolescents' living arrangements in Mtwara Town, and, by extension, the associated implications on the structural contexts of their sexual and reproductive practices. Apart from students who come from outside of town, it is rare to see adolescents renting their own rooms in Mtwara Town. The other exception refers to boys and girls who are in town for business or paid jobs. It is even much less expected of adolescent girls whose parents or guardians

are living in town. Yet there are several girls like Anna who willingly, or unwillingly, have to rent their own rooms, despite the fact that their parents or guardians live in town.

When I met Anna for the first time during our survey, she was living with her sister and had just completed her ordinary level secondary education. Anna had moved to her sister's residence located in a busier neighbourhood of Mtwara Town called Magomeni. In comparison with other neighborhoods, Magomeni is preferred by immigrants to town because of the low rate of rent coupled with its proximity to the town centre. Two months later, when I visited Anna in the company of Fatma (my field assistant), we found that Anna was living alone (*naishi mwenyewe tu*) in the room that had formerly been rented by her sister. Narrating to us Anna said, "my sister got married (*ameolewa*) and when she left I thought it was better for me to start my own life. I did not want to go with her because it would look like we are all married and in case of a divorce then we all get divorced." In this sense, the dynamics of the living arrangement exposed Anna to a new situation that had to be dealt with. This entailed the question on how to earn a living on her own.

While I was asking myself why she had not decided to go back to her parents, Anna pointed to another recent change in her life, namely that, "because I got a job (*kazi*) as a casual worker at the cashew nut processing factory called OLAMU, I thought I could try to live a simple ghetto life (*maisha ya gheto*)." Apparently, Anna had the option to join her sister's new family or go back to her parents who lived in another neighbourhood in Mtwara Town, and still continue with her new job. But as she noted, "after all, I saw myself as already an adult (*hata hivyo niliona nimeshakuwa mkubwa*)." Anna feels that she has no restrictions in terms of movements and interactions at her home at the moment. To prove that Anna says, "there is no one who controls when I should come home as I am now the head (*hakuna wa kuniuliza wala nini ....nishakuwa mwenye nyumba*)." In this sense, having a job and renting a room provided grounds for Anna to articulate adulthood and enjoy some kind of autonomy from parental control, at least temporarily. Because in case of the termination of her contract or the failure to make a

living by herself she would still claim adolescence and justify the support from her sister and her parents.<sup>118</sup>

However, Anna is concerned with making a good impression on her neighbours. On why that was important she asserted, “you know here I live with no relative (*ndugu*), so I would rely on their support in case of an emergency (*unajua mimi hapa naishi sina ndugu lolote litakalonikuta ni majirani zangu ndio wa kwanza kujua*).” This means that the neighbours constitute one of the social ties she has to consider even in her sexual practices.

Of her sexual relationship, unlike many of my informants, Anna did not engage in sexual relationships until she had completed her secondary school in 2010. Since then she has had two boyfriends, one at a time. Anna had broken up with her first boyfriend a few weeks before our first visit because he cheated on her with other girls. According to her that was a painful experience, “I just had to take courage hoping that I will get the right one. I felt bad and was in a difficult moment but I had to get used to that situation and here I am very ok.” Articulating her stake in the previous sexual partnership, Anna says, “he did not reject me but I was the one who rejected him, still, it was painful because I loved him (*mimi ndio nilimwacha siyo yeye, hata hivyo niliumia kwani ni kweli kwamba nilimpenda*).”

It took Anna a few weeks to start a new relationship. For Anna, a replacement was important in order to fulfill the requirements of being an adult *kutimiza wajibu kwa kuwa nishakuwa mkubwa*, meaning that in her current situation and status, being in a sexual partnership was proof that she was grown up. Having the ability to live in her own room not depending on parents or guardian, makes Anna imagine that she is in control of her own life (*kila ninachokifanya niamue mwenyewe*).

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<sup>118</sup> This was actually the case for another adolescent girl (Mwajabu, 19) who was considering going back to her parents after living in her own rented room for two years, because she could no longer pay the bills.

Boasting with reference to other girls and the common experiences of actors in her situation, Anna says, “I only have one boyfriend even if I am living alone (*Nina boyfriend mmoja tu, hata kama ninaishi maisha ya peke yangu*).” She also added, “I am not tempted by high standard life (*Sina tamaa na maisha ya hali ya juu*).” Still, Anna is not satisfied with her current life and she says, “I wish to live a better life or get married just like my sister (*natamani kuishi maisha mazuri tu au kuolewa kama dada yangu*).” Indeed, Anna is making a distinction between high life standard and better life. In this case, the former can be associated with negative connotations such as illicit means of its acquisition, hence denying actors’ social respectability. She thus opts for *maisha mazuri* in which marriage could be one of the means toward its attainment.

Anna’s current boyfriend, a mechanic (*fundi wa magari*) five years older than herself, has promised to marry her. But as Anna says, “it could take a while (*lakini bado kidogo*).” Anna did not know where exactly the mechanic had seen her for the first time. But she first saw him when he came to her home at night, asking her for a moment to talk, mediated through her neighbour and a friend. It took six months of seduction for Anna to accept the partner’s proposal and three more months before they had sex. According to Anna, they were tested for HIV, following her mother’s advice. Since it was rare for most of my informants to discuss sexual issues with parents, I was curious to learn how that had happened in Anna’s case. Was it simply because she had secondary education, as the public health promotion discourse would imply (see for example Jensen and Thornton 2003)?

During our second visit, I first asked Anna whether parents and other relatives knew about her sexual relationship status. At that time she said, “as for my parents I am not sure if they know but I know for sure that other people are aware of it (*wazazi sina uhakika kama wanajua ila watu wengine najua kwamba wanajua*).” She also admitted that, “the *others* do not bother about it (*wananichukulia kawaida tu*).” However, things had changed by our fifth visit because a member from the *others* had either leaked the information or her mother had overheard the *others* gossiping about her daughter (*nahisi watu walimwambia au aliwasikia wakiongea*).



Consequently, Anna was summoned and warned by her mother about the risks of HIV and pregnancy (differently perceived by Anna). But Anna denounced the rumour. Normalizing and justifying her sexual engagements, Anna sums up, “when she heard about it she tried to kind of warning and things like that but then I myself (...) as you know (*alivyosikia alianza kunionya onya na nini na nini lakini mimi mwenyewe ndio vile kama unavyojua tena*).” The insistent and consistent warning from her mother went along with the prospects that the current partner had induced to Anna through the offers, gifts and the promise to support her to pursue a course at the vocational training college (VETA). Finally, Anna confirmed her sexual relationship to her mother, and, according to her, the mother simply emphasized being careful about infectious diseases but did not try to restrict her engaging in a sexual relationship. Anna put this down to her age, which made restrictions more or less impossible anyhow (*umri nao pia unachangia kama kukataza amekataza amechoka*).

Interestingly, her mother had to cover up for her at another level of authority, that is, her father. Anna is pretty sure that, to date, her father does not know about her relationship. The question here is why the mother should cover up for her. As explained in the previous chapter, the mother felt the need to keep the secret because the father would lay the blame on her inability to control their daughter. But she also wanted to maintain her own reputation in the eyes of her husband.

However, Anna strives to conceal the relationship as best as possible. For instance, she meets with her boyfriend for chatting and sex away from home. As she aptly puts it, “I normally meet him in hidden corners and if we want to do the certain things (sex), we meet in a guesthouse (*nakutana naye vichochoroni tu kama tukitaka kuongea kama tukitaka kufanya vitu fulani huwa tunakutana gesti*).” This indicates among other things that Anna continues to feel the extension of her parents’ control through neighbours and the *others*, but creatively engages with them.

## 6.7 Summary

In this chapter I have focused on the lived sexual and reproductive experiences of adolescents within diverse social and cultural contexts. The aim was to shed new light on our understanding of what sexuality means for different young people, beyond social and cultural ideals. The analysis of individual adolescents' experiences illuminates the complexity of sexual and reproductive actions, contrary to the mainstream reductionist understanding of the same. The dynamics within sexual partnership formations and the individuals' ability to shift between, and/or integrate, two or more sexual formations suggests wide-ranging agentic processes of temporal social engagement and disengagement (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, Johnson-Hanks 2002, van Reeuwijk 2010).

The temporal orientations allow individual adolescents to make sense of, and manage inconsistencies, ambiguities, conflicts and uncertainties inherent in the context of their actions. Here, inter-subjectivity looms large and enables the adolescent in question to attain multiple and concurrent social belonging or membership (van Binsbergen 2007). Accordingly, the lived experiences not only add significantly to the sedimented knowledge base on which individuals habitually draw on to inform their actions, but also trigger imaginative and practical evaluative engagements. In specific terms, in their sexual encounters, adolescents not just draw from their past experiences but also project their immediate situations into the future (*distance experience*, to use Mead's words) along with contextualizing the present circumstances (see also Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

## **7. SETTING UP AND FOSTERING SEXUAL PARTNERSHIP(S)**

Contrary to the dominant and perhaps “traditional” views on adolescent sexuality, the key argument in this chapter is that adolescent sexual activities are enacted for different purposes rather than simply undertaken in the form of behaviours compelled by physical, mental urges or/and social routines. This should not be confused with a denial of biological, psychological and behavioural dimensions of sexuality but seen as the quest for a compelling analysis of what it means, and takes, for an individual adolescent to set up and foster a sexual partnership. In that respect, I explore the major processes and ways through which sexual partnerships are differently instituted and nurtured. Building on the (sexual) inter-subjective engagements portrayed in chapters five and six, I examine the multiple, overlapping, and often shifting attractions and expectations that adolescents project towards their (potential) sexual partner(s). Equally important, I demonstrate how adolescents commit their partners to actively participate in the respective sexual partnership. Finally, I sum up by highlighting the critical dimensions of courtship practices among adolescents in Mtwara Town today.

### **7.1 From seeing and being seen to dating**

It is evident in the processes through which adolescents establish their partnerships that the latter are imagined and intended. The establishment of sexual relationships entails a range of *inter-linked* processes that enable potential partners to see each other, become attracted, meet, interact, develop, and express intentions and expectations before making decisions. The processes are highly variable across individuals and partnerships, both in terms of the temporal and relational contexts of the actions involved. Since adolescents belong to a myriad of social relationships, issues of space and place surface at different stages of the processes. Significantly, concerns about social respectability, reputation and worth also emerge in varied forms. In theoretical regard, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 1000) suggest that temporal improvisation in terms of “maintaining suspense or expectations, manipulating tempos of action can allow the actors involved to gain material and/or symbolic advantages in relation to their partner in exchange.”

***To see and be seen: the body as an attention grabber***

This is a very critical point of departure in the journey towards sexual partnership(s). When I asked my informants about where they saw, and were seen, by their partners for the first time, I was amazed by the fact that the social spaces where adolescents meet their potential partner(s) are widespread. Apparently one can see and be seen by a potential partner in the following spaces: at home (*nyumbani*), at school (*shuleni*), at a nightclub, at a bar or restaurant, at the market (*sokoni*), at the beach, at a party (*kwenye pati/shughuli*), in the neighbourhood (*maeneo ya jirani na nyumbani*), on the street (*mtaani/kitaa*), and on the way (*njiani*) to and from school, shopping, visiting friends and relatives, fetching water, and so forth.

Some adolescents mentioned having found their partners on facebook (involved exchanging pictures) or via the “wrong number” phenomenon. The latter entails a situation where a person mistakenly (at least in principle) calls somebody whom he or she is not familiar with. In this context, the interested party would first collect more information on the whereabouts of the other and might follow up with regular text messages and even calls for a while, depending on the response of the other.

Inherent in this process are notions of sexual desirability (*kuvutia*) and the sense of being attracted (*kuvutiwa/kunogea*) that invoke interest in the potential partners (*kunitamani (sha)/kushidwa kujizuia/kushawishi/kumind*). These are not without implications for how adolescents see themselves and in terms of what they display on their bodies to make them appealing (see also Fuglesang 1994). During this stage and beyond, the issues of good looking (*kupendeza*), beauty (*uzuri/urembo*), smartness (*utanashati*) and showing off (*mapozi/ kuuza sura*) are brought into play. Indeed, most of the adolescents, both girls and boys, are preoccupied with displaying good looks through fashioned dress styles as another sign of “going with the times”.

Whereas many boys are concerned with being smart (*kupiga pamba*) by dressing up in jeans and T-shirts (*model*), often in a *sharobaro* or *kata (k)undu* style<sup>119</sup>, many girls see make-up (*kujiremba/kujipodoa*) and wearing trendy clothes such as tight jeans, leggings, tights and tops (*model, kuvaa vizuri*) as key to being attractive. Others integrate modern fashion aspects into the traditional dress code. For instance, a girl might do up her hair in a “modern” style, put on a long tight skirt and top, but cover her hair with a veil or put on skin tights along with a *hijab*. Boys often refer to such girls as *sister do lakini anajitanda*, meaning is a modern girl who still pays homage to tradition or religion.<sup>120</sup>



Plate 7.1: Display of “Sharobaro” style

© 2011 Msongo

<sup>119</sup> Although it is debatable as to what exactly is the meaning of the term *sharobaro* as used in Tanzania, one thing is clear that it has been appropriated to express particular “modern” lifestyles popular among male youth very much displayed in dressing styles, haircut, make ups and possession of trendy gadgets among others. See for example, <http://msongo.blogspot.ch/2012/08/the-way-of-sharobaro.html> (12.05.2013).

<sup>120</sup> Boys confirmed the tacit understanding of girls’ costumes and their religiosity. For example, they would not hesitate to approach a girl in her veil, in expectation that she would deny their proposal on the basis of her devotion. This is because it is possible for them to establish in advance that despite her display of devotion through the dress code, she might not be devoted all that much (*kujitanda kwingine unajua hapa kuna dini au hakuna*).

It is also common for girls to creatively transform the “traditional Swahili” costumes in a manner that allows them give shape to their figures. For instance, instead of putting on a long dress and tie a piece of *khanga* around the waist along with *mtandio/shungi*, a girl would just put on a top ending just over her waist and a piece of *khanga* below the waist but covering her legs. Often this goes with a pedal pusher (a pant that ends just below the knee), tights or leggings. The attire is highly disapproved of by parents as shameful (*kivazi cha aibu*) which also means that parents do not buy such clothes for their daughter. But girls would still get hold of the garments. In keeping with the expectation that most of them are not yet earning their own money, the question arises: where do they get the money from to buy the clothes. I turn to this point in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

In fact, almost all the girls positively perceived their bodies in relation to clothing. The common expressions in this respect included, “I know that I am cute, look good in my clothes, and attract people (*najua kwamba mimi mzuri/mrembo na nikivaa napendeza na kuwavutia watu*),” (Salma, 16 years of age), or, “I know that I am pretty (...) in my garments, and when I walk on the street people stare at me with admiration *mimi mkali nikivaa nikakatiza watu wananiamgalia*,” (Anna, portrait 6.10). Changes to their bodily appearance not only draw attention of the respective adolescent but also from the others, including potential partners (see Leila, portrait 6.5).

Significantly, most boys pointed out that they were attracted by the appearance of their partners when they saw them for the first time. In particular, their attention was drawn to the girl’s figure. Specifically, figure number eight (*umbo namba nane*) and six (*umbo namba sita*) are the most popular (see also Fuglesang 1994)<sup>121</sup>. While the former emphasizes the proportion between the breast, waist and hips (*amejazia vizuri*), the latter stresses a woman’s waist and hips (*amejazia nyuma/ana usafiri*). Other attributes include nice eyes (*macho mazuri*) and nice legs (*miguu mizuri*). Such a girl is considered cute

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<sup>121</sup> For reflections on the body, beauty and sexuality beyond the weight and waist-to-hip ratio (WHR), see Donnan and Magowan (2010:23-47). In their discussion on the centrality of body display in cotemporary sexual lives, Johnston and Longurst (2000) have gone as far as suggesting that we live in *the era of the body*.

(*mkali/kifaa/chuma*).<sup>122</sup> It is a common practice for boys to stare at a girl with the mentioned attributes while expressing admiration for her, especially when she is dressed up in “body shaping” costumes. This was observed at *maskani* and sometimes during my conversation with boys; whenever such a girl passed by, the boy would shift his attention to her. Often the boys would simply say “this way we won’t survive (*namna hii hatuponi*)” meaning that it is hard to keep oneself from approaching such a girl and, by extension, if she should be infected with HIV, they are likely to contract it.<sup>123</sup>

On the other hand, girls also reported to pay attention to the appearance of the potential partner. Specifically, they are impressed by the dress style (*kupiga pamba/sharobaro*), some also pointed to particular male body features. For instance, Leila (portrait 6.5) had been impressed by the *sharobaro* aura of her current partner when he approached her for the first time at Ushirika disco club. Similarly, Kaziga (portrait 6.2) claimed to have been approached by two girls on the strength of his smartness, since he always appeared in models.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, Maimuna, nineteen-year-old adolescent mother of a two-year-old child who lives with her sister met her boyfriend at the disco club for the first time. According to her, the two admired each other (*kutamaniana*) before they exchanged contacts and started communicating. Maimuna felt first attracted by his dress style and body shape, and only later by what she called his “good manners (*tabia njema*).” Similarly, Zuena, a teenage mother (see portrait 6.6) with a boyfriend (father of her child) was, and still is, attracted to her boyfriend by his physical appearance and style of dressing. She met him for the first time on the street (*kita*a).

On the other hand, Mahazi, an adolescent boy with extensive experience in multiple partnerships recounts how he first met his current two girlfriends, “...that one I saw for the first time at the disco (*huyo nilikutana naye disco*), I did not inform my chick to come

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<sup>122</sup> For a relatively exhaustive catalogue of both complimentary and derogatory terms commonly used to represent girls/women in relation to sexuality in Tanzania, see Swilla’s (2000) *Voluptuous Vacuous Vamps: Stereotyped Representation of Women in Kiswahili Press*.

<sup>123</sup> As far as I am aware, this is also a common practice among adult men, not only in Mtwara but also elsewhere in Tanzania.

<sup>124</sup> For casual partners, some girls are concerned with the potential to accrue more resources from the partner if it looks that he has money.

with me to disco on that day (*demu wangu sikumshtua kabisa*)....” On what attracted him to the girl, Mahazi notes,

... you see she looked very attractive (*alininogea sana*) in her tight shorts and a top which ended just above her stomach (...) so I decided to chase her on her way home (...) just before her home we had to hide somewhere behind the tree and luckily (*bahati nzuri*) she accepted and something like that happened.

Indeed, Mahazi was lucky, as he explicitly explains in the above excerpt, to be able to convince the girl to accept his proposal and have sex (referred to above as “something like that”) with him right away. This is due to the fact that it is rare for girls to immediately accept the potential partner’s proposal and demand for sex. One explanation here would be that each of the two actors regarded each other as casual partners, even though their partnership became stable later on. Recollecting where he saw his other current girlfriend, Mahazi notes that the girlfriend lives in his neighborhood and that they grew up together. What attracted him to her was the beauty of her figure, or, as he puts it, “this chick is cute (...) figure number eight which is not hard to see even when she is in her normal attire (*huyu demu ni mkali umbo namba nane halijifichi hata kama ametupia hizi nguo za kawaida*).” However, he admits that it was not easy to get her to accept his proposal to date him, a process that took him about four months.

Likewise, Sharobaro (see portrait 6.3) explicitly points to the appealing look of the girls as a powerful aspect that draws the attention of most boys when they first see their partners. Recounting how he first saw Asha, one of his current girlfriends, Sharobaro emphasized on how he was struck by her bodily appearance (*figure yake inaita*) when he saw her at the shop where her friend worked as a shopkeeper. At his own time, Sharobaro asked for Asha’s mobile number from her friend, after his attempt to talk to her in person had failed due to Asha’s reluctance (*amenizingua sana huyu dogo*). According to him, it is common for girls to discourage boys/men on the first occasion, before they “turn in” (*ni kawaida kuzingua kabla ya kuingia line*).

To induce Asha to pick up his call and listen to his proposal, Sharobaro first loaded Asha’s mobile account with airtime through a service commonly known in Tanzania as *kumpunguzia/kurushia salio*, meaning “to reduce your credit by sending airtime to



another user”. The service is provided by all the mobile phone companies in Tanzania. For Sharobaro, the 2,000 TZS (about 1.5 USD) was meant to soften and motivate Asha to either receive his call and listen to him or to read his text messages and respond, or both (*vocha/salio linampa nguvu ya kupokea simu, kukusikiliza au kusoma ujumbe na kukujibu*). It was through this approach that Sharobaro succeeded in persuading Asha to meet him. On how the next steps developed, I come back later.

Similarly, Kaziga (see portrait 6.2) seriously considers the bodily appearance of potential and real partners. He reiterates the fact that he is attracted by good-looking girls especially those whom he calls “sister dos” (*masisita du*), referring to girls “going with the times” manifested in terms of their display of fashioned dress, make-up and being open to sexual partnership(s). In this regard Kaziga recounts, “...my permanent partner has a very attractive figure especially when she is in a more ‘sister do’ attire (...*maumbile yake ni ya kuvutia endapo atavaa nguo za kisisita du zaidi...*).” Inasmuch as he wishes that the girlfriend appears in the mentioned costume, Kaziga admits, “she rarely displays such dress when she is outside home (...), she is always in her respectable attire (*mara chache sana labda awe home, lakini nje ya home kwao anavaa nguo za heshima*).” Yet, for Kaziga this is not that much of a problem because he finally has the opportunity to see for himself how beautiful the girlfriend is, as he noted,

I can’t lie about her, she is often in a veil (...*kama mavazi simsingizii kwamba yeye muda mwingi sana anakuwa ni mtu wa kujitanda*), so it is not easy to detect her body appearance unless you have her in private like myself (*hivyo kirahisi rahisi kumchukulia umbo lake liko vipi haumjui hadi uwe naye ndani kama mimi*), you see (...) it is because she prefers to dress up in long clothes with a skirt which ends almost here (pointing to just above the feet), and she puts on sandals (*kwa sababu yeye anapenda kuva nguo ndefu na sketi mwisho humu na anavaa sandal*).

The above passage suggests that boys can imagine the beauty of a girl even when she appears in a costume that does not clearly display her figure. The situation adds to the state of suspense and wanting to prove oneself. While in some cases the desires are satisfied, as with Kaziga, in other cases they are not (*kumbe hakuna lolote*).

Thus, in view of the above illustrative yet not exhaustive account, it is plausible to argue that the body is a very central site for articulating and affirming sexual desirability

between potential partners at the stage of seeing and being seen. Here, the body receives and commands symbolic importance. Consequently, the latter induces the necessity for the actors to venture on to the next steps, that is, trying to approach and interact with the potential partner. This finding corroborates a potent argument by Dowsett (2004: 73) that sexual desirability is a “product of active social processes not the law of nature” or *mere behavior*.

### ***Approaching and being approached by the potential partner***

This is the juncture when intentions of the potential partners are articulated both explicitly and implicitly. Unlike in the dominant discourses, where the actors involved in approaching (*kutongoza*) are considered to impose their will on the seemingly “victimized” actors being approached (*kutongozwa*), I argue that both actors in question actively participate in the process. That is why the latter demands specific tactics, skills and competences on both sides. Above all, the intended outcome is never guaranteed. Ergo, the process is flux with both consensus and disagreements. Proceeding from the survey of 500 adolescent girls in Mtwara Town, it was clear (at least from the responses) that the majority of the girls were capable of turning down proposals from men whenever approached sexually while they did not want it (see table 7.1).

*Table 7.1: Dare to speak out when approached in a sexual way but don't want it (N=500)*

<b>Adolescent girls by reproductive status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not yet started child bearing (n=424)	397	94
Started child bearing (pregnant/mothers:n=76)	73	96

Although the common practice is that boys/men approach girls/women, there are a few cases where girls/women explicitly approach boys/men. In situations where a girl feels shy, as she is not expected to explicitly express her feelings to a boy, the girl can still do so indirectly. Still, given the inter-subjective nature of the engagements, it is not difficult for the respective boy to detect or realize it in their interactions.

### ***Kutongoza: sheer possibilities***

The practice entails both individual and collective efforts, and takes on different forms: direct encounters, communication through mobile phone (most popular today, in the past letters were commonly used) and internet, and use of go-betweens (friends, neighbours or relatives) or a combination of two or more of the approaches.<sup>125</sup> Regardless of the approach taken, the idea is to deliver the message that a boy would like to engage in a sexual partnership with a girl. The message can be delivered explicitly in such phrases (*mistari*) as: “I love you (*nakupenda*)”; “I need you (*nakutaka*)”; “I want to be with you (*nataka kuwa nawewe*)”; or “I miss you (*nimekumisi*)”, and even in the rather more assertive way, “I mind you (*nimekumaindi*)”. In other cases, the message is conveyed through bodily actions such as attempting to hold hands, kiss, hug, caress and pet. Depending on the prior interactions of the potential partners, this period of proposing may be characterized by going on joint outings and offers of small gifts such as chips with eggs or fried chicken (*chips mayai/kuku*) along with drinks (soda or beer), airtime (*vocha*) and cash (*hela/pesa*), among others (see also Wamoyi et al. 2010).

Regardless of the response from the potential partner, one of the common features of *kutongoza* is a persistent and often consistent pursuing, or chasing. Whereas most girls see this as disturbing (*usumbufu/kunga'nga'niza*) but necessary, boys refer to it as chasing (*kufuatilia/kufukuzia*). Especially when it necessitates direct encounters with the potential partners, boys call the process *kutega mingo* which means positioning oneself in places or on paths where the targeted partner is likely to show up. Quite often, boys expect to “drag their feet” several times (*kuzungushwa*) before their proposals are accepted. Here, even a negative response is taken as promising (*sitaki nataka/anazuga*). There are also some cases where a positive feedback is given immediately, leading to the next steps. Upon acceptance, most boys increase the degree of interactions, gifts and offers to the respective girl in the push for sexual intercourse. But others feel satisfied with the achievement and even reduce their efforts towards the girl. As depicted in

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<sup>125</sup> This dimension of courtship practices has witnessed tremendous changes over the past three decades, following what de Bruijn et al. (2009) has called the “mobile phone communication revolution”.

chapter six, not all sexual partnerships end up with sexual intercourse, but the majority does.

For instance, Sharobaro's approach to Asha (see portrait 6.3) as mentioned in the previous section, involved providing airtime along with constant and insistent persuasion. Notably, Sharobaro wanted to take her out for a drink or a meal so that he could use the encounter to push his agenda. After three weeks of reluctance, Asha finally accepted to meet Sharobaro. Because he wanted to impress her, Sharobaro picked up Asha from her sister's place with a motorcycle and they went to the popular and relatively expensive Makonde Beach Resort. Not many boys and girls go there just for meals and drinks but occasionally for disco shows/performances. According to Sharobaro, he told her to order whatever she liked. Asha ordered *chips kuku* (fried potatoes/chips with chicken) and reddis beer. Of course Sharobaro had to also order for himself. As they were eating and drinking, Sharobaro continued with his attempts at persuasion, but Asha kept on insisting that she had a boyfriend. After a third beer, Sharobaro proposed that they take some beer and go to his room and continue drinking. To his surprise, Asha accepted and they ended up having sex in his room.

### ***Kutongozwa: active participation***

For some reasons, most girls expect to be approached (*kutongozwa*) at one point or the other in their everyday life.<sup>126</sup> This is partly due to the popular notion among young people that it is normal to have a sexual partner on the one hand, and girl's power to attract not only the boys but also grown men, as explained earlier. The other part is based on own experience or that of peers and relatives. Who exactly would approach the girls is one of the things that might come as a surprise because apparently the potential partners can be a friend, a neighbour, a stranger or a friend to a relative, among others.

No matter who the potential partner is, girls rarely accept the proposal at the first encounter for reasons that I explain below. Most girls would reject outright with an

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<sup>126</sup> For a compelling view of (young) women as agents in sexual encounters, see Haram's (2001) *In Sexual Life Women are Hunters: AIDS and women who drain men's bodies. The case of the Meru of northern Tanzania*.

expression like, “I don't want you (*sikutaki*)”, or simply, “I don't want (*sitaki*)”. Others would say, “I already have a boyfriend (*nina mtu wangu*)” even when they do not have one. Others give promising responses such as, “Let me think about it (*ngoja nijifikirie*). Apparently girls intentionally express some reluctance (*kumzungusha*), at least temporarily, even if they are basically interested. The duration of reluctance may last from a few minutes to several months, as illustrated in several portraits later in this section.

Similarly, upon acceptance to date the potential partner most girls still buy time to agree on and consent to engage in sexual intercourse with the partner. Depending on the situation, and taking into account their judgment of their suitor, some girls take a few days, some a few weeks, and others several months. As for most casual partnerships, the duration can be a matter of a few minutes or hours, but still certain elements of reluctance are expressed. However, it is also important to note here that a casual partnership can be transformed into a committed sexual relationship, as the case of Sharobaro and Asha indicates in portrait 6.3. For the sake of providing a general view as to whether or not girls are able to decide on the partner and the timing of sex, a glance at the statistical data from 500 girls in Mtwara Town might be indicative (see table 7.2).

*Table 7.2: Ability to decide freely if, when and with whom to have sex (N=500)*

<b>Adolescent girls by reproductive status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not yet started child bearing (n=424)	312	74
Started child bearing (pregnant/mothers:n=76)	67	88

Overall, the majority of girls confirmed that they were free to decide on when and with whom they wanted sex.<sup>127</sup> Perhaps the immediate question is how can we go beyond the simplicity of quantitative data to grasp the lived empirical experience. One way to escape

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<sup>127</sup> I am aware of what I would call “extreme cases” where girls, and sometimes boys, are coerced into sex or are sexually abused, if not actually raped. For an overview of the situation of sexual abuse among children and adolescents in Tanzania, see Lalor (2004), cf. Rwebangira and Liljeström (1998). However, it is erroneous to assume that all sexual activities among children and adolescents are necessarily coerced because the empirical realities discussed in the present study indicate unquestionable agentive sexual engagements among adolescents. For a view of children as agents in sexual practices in Tanzania, see van Reeuwijk (2010).

the epistemological caveat is to enquire into the lived experiences. Here I address the temporal dimension in terms of the *interval* between seeing/being seen, approaching/being approached and dating, to sexual intercourse. More importantly, I explore the actors' different purposes of managing what Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 1000) have called the "tempos of the actions" (see also Bourdieu 1977).

In the first place, the interval gives space for the actors to assess the potential partner and explore him or her in terms of, who is the partner, where does he or she live or come from, and whether he or she can be committed. Secondly, it serves to induce a certain degree of commitment into the partners through gift giving and receiving. I return to this point later to explain the role of gifts in sexual partnerships. Thirdly, the interval allows partners to realize gains and/or setting up standards as well as commanding legitimacy for gains. Lastly, but equally important, it enables both girls and boys to situate themselves in line with the desired social worth. For instance, whereas girls buy time to articulate that they are not easy girls or prostitute, boys exploit the delays to prove that they are not playboys but committed partners. Thus, the processes involve situated judgments, drawing on habitual practices and projections into the future.

## **7.2 Expectations from sexual partner(s) and the partnership(s)**

As reiterated earlier, the expectations or possibilities that adolescents project into sexual relationships in general, and the sexual partner(s) in particular, are both multiple and shifting. This owes, and adds, to the fact that as an aspect of the practice of everyday life, sexuality is not just complex, but also dynamic. Thus, as intending subjects, adolescents, both boys and girls, contextualize their sexual and reproductive life projects and ends. In concrete terms, and taking into account the intermittent rhythms of their intentions, the expectations crisscross several realms, ranging from pragmatic and emotional dimensions of "care" and "love" to satisfaction of sexual desires, realization of social worth and marital prospects. These aspirations also feed into what constitute the horizons of hopes and fears for the respective adolescent, or what Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 984) would call "imaginative engagement of the future". This, I argue, plausibly explains why the expectations of adolescents concerning sexual partnerships, just like their lived

experiences, are so diverse and contextual. In what follows, I show how sexual anticipations among adolescents vary across, and intersect along, gender lines, among other dimensions. Equally important, I depict how these expectations draw on multiple reference frames from within and beyond Mtwara Town. Above all, the lived experiences of the respective adolescents constantly feed into their expectations.

### ***Care, love, sexual satisfaction and the fate of sexual partnership(s)***

Notions of “care” strongly surface in the expressions of what girls expect from, and are attracted by, their sexual partners. Three interrelated dimensions are evident namely, *kujali*, *kuthamini* and *kuhudumia*. Whereas the first two refer to “being concerned with” or “paying attention to”, the latter points to the practice of “providing for”. Apparently for most girls, a partner who “cares” is expected to be concerned with, value, and provide for their needs (*mahitaji/shida*). For most adolescent mothers, care from their partner also involved support related to the costs of child rearing (cf. Haram 2004). For example, Zuena, a mother of one child, expects to be loved and cared for by her partner who is also the father of her child. Because of that she is attracted to her boyfriend as she says, “he gives me whatever I want (...) currently providing for our child (...*ninachotaka ananipa...anamtunza pia mototo wetu*).” In return she offers pleasant talk and what she calls “good stuff (*mambo mazuri*)” in order to satisfy and contain the partner.

To a greater extent, *kujali*, *kuthamini* and *kuhudumia* are considered to be an obligation on the part of a committed partner, although they can also be taken as *kusaidia*, meaning helping out. The latter alludes that “care” is not a partner’s liability but a crucial expression of “love” and commitment. Although the expectations are high on the boyfriends to provide for their girlfriends, the former also enjoy some sort of *huduma* from the latter in particular situations. Some boys are provided for in terms of cash by their girlfriends, while others are occasionally bailed out of specific needs by their partners. Simultaneously, most boys considered this as simply helping out (*kusaidia*), not an obligation of their girlfriends, and take it as an important dimension for evaluating “care” and “love” from the partner.

Furthermore, expressions of “care”, particularly the aspects of *kujali*, *kuthamini* and “love” are also mediated through communication practices. The frequency of physical interactions, calls, text messages (chatting) often with romantic contents, wishes or /and greetings delivered orally by a go-between are part and parcel of the valued and anticipated practices among committed partners. For instance, Habiba, a nineteen-year-old girl with multiple partners, was often busy with her mobile phone during our visits. For Habiba, one of the things that make her feels that she is loved by a partner is regular communication involving romantic expressions (see portrait 8.2). Quite often, reduced degree of the mentioned practices without offering a sound explanation is interpreted as diminishing “care” and “love” for the partner concerned (*hanijali, amepunguza mapenzi kwangu, amenichunia*). For instance, Malkia’s experience with her first boyfriend illuminates how she was concerned and disturbed by the declining frequency of communication with her boyfriend.

Likewise, Sharobaro’s long-term girlfriend Zamda (see portrait 6.3) was alerted by the changes in communication routine between the two, following her three-month travel to Dar es Salaam. The two partners were used to communicating late at night, enjoying the reduced tariffs from mobile companies, a practice that is popular among young sexual partners elsewhere in Tanzania, too. As a result of the irregularity in communication between her and Sharobaro, Zamda did not inform him about her return from Dar es Salaam, but visited his home by surprise. Certainly, Zamda confirmed her suspicions as she found Sharobaro in the room with Asha on that morning.

Another dimension of communication practice is evident in Kaziga’s partnership with his seemingly permanent girlfriend (see portrait 6.2). Here, communication not only mediates “care” and “love” between partners but also learning sexual skills and competences together. Kaziga and his partner are exposed to alternative sexual scripts through a radio programme called “night dress” or “romantic night” (*usiku wa mahaba*). The programme is aired every Monday at midnight by a popular radio station in



Tanzania, called Radio One Stereo.<sup>128</sup> Among other aspects of love, the programme discusses sexual experiences, best practices, and the “do’s” and “don’ts”.

In addition, the programme connects, re-unites and provides guidance and counseling to real and potential partners. It involves interactive sessions where listeners are invited to call in or send text messages on the topic at issue. One of the sessions that drew my attention while doing fieldwork in Mtwara Town was on the meaning of the first kiss in one’s sexual career. This was particularly striking because young adults were sharing their experiences along with admiration by adolescents who had not yet started sexual activities. Actually, this hinted to the fact that many young people stay awake to participate in the programme as validated by Kaziga,

... since we love each other, I like to engage my partner to listen to the night dress radio programme (...) because there are things we learn in there (*kwa sababu mimi na mpenzi wangu tunapendana kwa hiyo napenda kusikiliza kipindi kile, mle kuna vitu fulani unafundishwa*). I like very much that programme and every Monday at midnight we call each other and chat through mobile phone along with tuning in on the programme (*usiku wa mahaba napenda sana, kila jumatatu saa sita kamili usiku tunaambiana, tunaliwadhana na hapo tunachart tunatakiana maisha mema*).

Moreover, gift giving and receiving practices (*kutoa na kupokea zawadi*) are also crucial in expressing “care” in terms of *kujali*, *kuthamini* and *kupenda* (love). Of my informants, all girls and most boys confirmed to have received gifts from a partner. As noted earlier in this chapter, boys would entertain a potential girlfriend with gifts but it is also common for girls to offer gifts to their boyfriends. The frequency of gift giving can decrease in the course of the partnership, but is still expected. Basically several types of gifts are common in adolescent sexual partnerships, in fact not very different to adult partners. These include artificial rose flowers, Valentine and birthday cards, clothes of all sorts including panties, make-up and perfumes, mobile phones, chocolates and ice-cream, foods and drinks, among others. Apparently, the types of gifts are either seasonal or circumstantial, or both.

Concerning how gifts induce commitment on the part of the recipient, in this case, a partner, it has been argued that a gift “commits the recipient to reciprocity” (Stroeken

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<sup>128</sup> There are similar shows on several other radio and television stations in Tanzania.

2010: 6). Important to note here is that the reciprocation does not take a “linearity” course in the sense of a means-to-ends, but occurs rather in a “non-linearity” framework which cannot be grasped outside the interdependence between the partners in relation to the multiplicity of aspirations and the quest for social well-being (Stroeken 2010: 6). Here actors make “reasonable” judgments beyond mere rationalities (Bourdieu 1998: 93).<sup>129</sup>

Although some of my informants were earning their own income from a casual work, a small business or, in a few cases, employment, the majority did not earn any money but depended entirely on their parents/guardians, especially those who were still at school. An important question was how they mobilized the required amount to be able to buy gifts and provide for their partner’s needs. This hints to the creativity of the adolescents as social actors. Some cut on expenses related to schooling, like extra classes (*tuition*), some saved on transport and pocket money provided by parents or pocketed the money given by a partner(s), while others appealed to relatives such as elder sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts and grandparents.

Equally important in terms of the expectations in adolescent sexual partnership(s) is sex and sexual satisfaction. These are central for both boys and girls, with a few exceptions though, as depicted in chapter six. For most boys, satisfying their sexual desires is the number one prospect when setting up a sexual partnership(s). In relation to their partners, acceptance to engage in sexual intercourse attests that the partner has accepted him and is in love with the boy in question (*amenikubali/ananipenda*). In fact some boys reject (*naachana nae*) their partners if they are not open to sex because in such a situation the boy feels useless or hopeless (*najiona boya au bwege*). For instance, Haule noted that, “if I fail to have sex with the partner I feel useless... (*kwa sababu kama sitafanya mapenzi nae nitajiona kama mimi bwege yaani*).” Actually, most boys expected their girlfriends to be available for sexual activities whenever they are needed.

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<sup>129</sup> See Bourdieu’s *Practical Reason* (1998: 92-123) for a plausible treatise of gifts as symbolic goods. Going beyond the classical conceptions of gift exchange by Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, Bourdieu pays attention on the temporal dimension of the practice of gift giving and receiving.

Upon acceptance by the girlfriend, boys strive to sexually satisfy their partner in view of both attracting the partner(s) and defending their own sense of masculinity, thereby avoiding the shame of being cheated on (*kunyang'anywa/kutendwa*). This entails acquiring sexual skills from different sources such as watching pornographic clips and movies, movies with love stories, following love programmes on TV, radio and in newspapers or magazines. Most of my male informants confirmed to have watched pornography. Some watched in friends' ghettos (*mageto ya washikaji*), some had porn clips on their mobile phones, and some owned CDs with porn films, which they watched at home late at night after the parents had gone to sleep. In other cases, boys watch pornographic movies or clips with their girlfriends as part of the "sex menu", just as they prepare to perform sexual intercourse (*hamu inatukuta haraka*).

Like in many other towns and cities in Tanzania, it is not difficult to access porn movies burned on a CD, either from a movie kiosk, a CD-burning store or from a *machinga*, meaning a street seller/hawker. The price ranges between 1,500 and 3,000 Tanzania Shillings (1 and 2 USD). For most boys, it does not necessarily require owning a CD but having someone from whom to borrow the movie. Additionally, many households own a television set along with CD player. Again, those without it can still watch at neighbours and friends. Furthermore, there are numerous video-show clubs everywhere in Mtwara Town where such movies are occasionally shown, albeit illegally. The movies are advertised using euphemisms such as *pilau*, literally meaning spiced rice *kachumbari* which means salad, *chachandu*, literally referring to an appetizer, and *mambo yetu yale* meaning "those things of ours". Most boys and girls are aware of the schedule and euphemisms.

On the other hand, most girls considered that sex is important for satisfying their partners (*kumfurahisha/kumriwadha/kumridhisha*). Such girls also understand that nearly all boys would not tolerate being in a partnership without sex (*mtoto wakiume ukimzungusha sana anaghairi/anakuacha*). It is thus in the interest of the girls to satisfy the sexual desires of their partners so as to contain them, and enjoy the opportunities associated with the partnership(s) in terms of "care" or/and "love". Alike, to prove that they are not

engaging in sexual intercourse to simply please their partners, some girls pointed out that they could no longer abstain (*haitakuwa rahisi/ni vigumu kwa sasa*) for longer periods because they were now “used to” being in a partnership (*nimeshazoea*).

A few others like Asha, one of Sharobaro’s girlfriends (see portrait 6.3), overtly strive for sexual pleasure in the partnership. In her case, Asha rejected the use of condoms because they hurt her so that she was not enjoying sex. Equally, Leila (see portrait 6.5) considers that sex is very important in a sexual partnership as it testifies that she has accepted her partner and that he is attracted to her. This understanding comes from her experience that partners shy away when denied sex.<sup>130</sup>

Finally, but equally important, are the marriage prospects, particularly for girls. As reiterated earlier on in chapter six, premarital sexual partnership(s) constitutes one of the major routes towards marriage, especially for girls. Marriage is aspired by most girls as a means to escape parental control (*niwe na kwangu*) and attain a better life (*maisha mazuri*). Thus, the anticipation of getting a suitor looms large at some point in the life of an adolescent girl, compared to her male counterparts. The incitement to get married was even higher among teenage mothers. This makes sense when related to the contexts of their actions, that is, after the completion of primary or secondary education, most girls do not succeed in pursuing further education and, therefore, face limited chances for employment in the formal sector (see UNICEF 2011, URTa 2010). Here the promise of a better life through education fades. Consequently the girls (just like boys in similar situations) have to imagine alternative routes towards a better life (see also Cole 2010). Of course, girls who still see the possibility of attaining their imagined future through education, strive to pursue towards such ends and projects. After all, the conception of life among most adolescents in Mtwara Town is not confined to simplistic coherence and irreversible stages. Instead, they consider their life courses as flexible and reversible (see also Johnson-Hanks 2006).

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<sup>130</sup> For insights on the dearth of the pleasure dimension of sexuality in the mainstream research on the subject in Africa (which also testifies the significance of the findings of the present study), see Spronks’ (2011) *Beyond Pain, Towards Pleasure in the Study of Sexuality in Africa*.

Understandably, boys rarely state marriage as being one of the primary things they anticipated from a partnership, although it is not altogether absent in their imagination. For instance, mindful of what girls expect, most boys would express the possibility of marrying the partner (*tutaishi wote/sitakusahau/sitakuacha/tutaoana*) when approaching her and in the course of the partnership (see portrait 6.1). The idea is to gain the girlfriend's confidence or/and commitment (*kunyenga/kushawishi*). For instance, Kaziga (portrait 6.2) recounts how he usually reminds his favourite partner, "I normally tell her my life is in your hands (...) you are like my eyes (...) you are the best woman, I believe we can be together in a matrimony (...*wewe ni kama macho, wewe ni mwanamke bora, nina imani mwisho wa siku tunaweza kufunga ndoa halafu tutakuwa pamoja*)."

Most of the boys imagine a better life through education based on the imaginary of "education as a key to better life" since it is believed to open up employment opportunities. Relating to the imaginary, they refer to friends, relatives and neighbours from within and outside Mtwara Town who are educated when pointing to what they see as attributes of a better life, such as a good house, a car and a job. Some of these images are drawn from the media. Likewise, those who no longer see any possibility of a better life through education still seek it, but through other means. These range from business of all kinds, a paid job such as manual work or driving (motorcycle, tricycle and cars).

Others engage in self-employment in agriculture, fishing and other sectors. A few others indulge in the arts industry and strive to become musicians or movie actors. To express their optimism they talk about role models whom they wish to emulate and they convince themselves that *tutatoka*, meaning literally, "we will get out"; in this case they refer to moving from their current life condition to a better life. Another popular expression is *tutawini*, meaning, "we shall win"; here they consider life as a competition or a test (*mtihani*) and hope to emerge as winners in the end. For them there is still hope (cf. Mains 2012).

It follows, therefore, that boys and girls have both common and diverging expectations with regard to their sexual partner-ship(s). In most cases, however, the expectations are

intersecting to the extent that they trigger partners to actively induce and commit each other towards the realization of either the individual or collective aspirations, or both. Yet, there are also situations where the expectations of partners can be competing and contradictory, leading to tensions between what the partners imagined and their lived experiences. Thus, it is unquestionable that, as a social actor, an adolescent has stakes/interests in the sexual partnership(s). As such, one does not just wait for his or her own expectations to be fulfilled but does something intending to draw the attention of his or her partner(s) to act towards meeting the desired possibilities. Consequently, it is naive to confine the horizons of fears and risks related to adolescent sexual partnerships and practices to the biomedical and psychological realms. As I demonstrate in what follows, the risk dimensions in the sexual and reproductive lives of the adolescent are inclusive and extend into the realms of social well-being in its broad sense.

Anna (portrait 6.10) considers that it is vital to get what she wants from a partner (*kikubwa kabisa anipe kile ninachotaka hayo mengine baadae*). Accordingly, she is attracted to her current partner because of his kindness, “care” and promises to support her in her education, and later marry her. In return, she tries to love him “genuinely” (*kumpenda kwa dhati*), giving him whatever he wants. Since the boyfriend considers sex as crucial, Anna feels it is important too, in line with the prospects of marriage. Consequently, the risk dimensions or horizon of fears in her partnership include: to be cheated on (*kumfumania na mwanake mwingine*), a risk that she was once through and dealt with it by taking courage (*kukaza moyo*) and breaking up with her first partner, hoping to find another partner; to be dumped while in love (*kuniacha wakati nampenda*); getting pregnant, while the partner rejects the responsibility of support and care (*anipe mimba halafu anaiache*). Here pregnancy is not a risk if he accepts responsibility but she is now avoiding the risk by using condoms and contraceptives (*kuchoma sindano*). For Anna, STIs including HIV also add to what she consider as risk in sexual life but she believes that the infections especially HIV take time to be detected hence they are not immediate. As noted earlier, Anna (following the advice from her mother) demanded an HIV test before initiating sexual intercourse with her new partner, unlike in the case with her first partner.

Likewise, Salma, a secondary school girl of eighteen living with her parents, was in her third sexual partnership during our six visits. She expects the partner to “care” (*anijali*) for her to the point that she feels loved (*nijue napendwa*). As a result, she is attracted to her boyfriend by the “love” (*mapenzi*) she gets from him. In order to attract the partner she does things to satisfy him which includes giving him good love (*mapenzi mazuri*). The latter includes sending him romantic text messages, offering him whatever he wants from her (*kumutimizia kila anachotaka*); one of the needs is sex for which they meet at her partner’s home. In line with the mentioned expectations and efforts to hold on to the partner, she does not want him to disgust her (*sipendi aniudhi*) which would entail cheating on her (*kumfumania na mtu mwingine*), and she avoids pregnancy (*mimba*) because she is still at school.

On her part, Maimuna is nineteen-year-old adolescent mother of a two-year-old child who lives with her sister and has a boyfriend. She expects and feels good being “cared” for by her partner (*anijali*), hence she satisfies the partner she loves (*kumpenda sana*) and helps him out with money when she can (*kumtoa*). At the same time, she chats with her boyfriend on the phone and meets him at his place for sex. As for the feared dimensions, she says, “I don’t want him to dump me while I am still in love with him (*sitaki aniache wakati bado nampenda*).” To avoid this, she notes, “I express so much ‘love’ to him so that he knows and doesn’t leave me (*kumpenda sana hadi ajue asiniache*).” In addition, she worries about pregnancy but not in the biomedical sense as she says, “making me pregnant and then rejecting me (*anipe mimba halafu anikatae*).” The risk here does not lay in the pregnancy itself, but rather in the partner’s possible rejection of his responsibility to take “care” of her and the baby. Consequently, she uses condoms because, as she says, “I don’t want to hear about pregnancy (...) I am not ready to conceive again (*sitaki kusikia mimba...sijajipanga tena*)”

Depicting a slightly different situation is Somoe, a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl living with her parents. Somoe started sexual activities at fourteen and since then she has had two boyfriends, one at a time. She stayed with the first boyfriend for one year before he

cheated on her (*alinitenda*). Then she entered into the current partnership one month after breaking up with the previous boyfriend. From her recent experience she feels that it is common for boys/men to have multiple partners, but truly love only one. Hence, she would not leave a boyfriend simply because he had cheated on her, but instead would constantly argue with him, as she recounts, “I will not leave him but argue as usual (...) I will have to forgive him, what can I do (...) the last time I was naïve (*simwachi ila kugombana palepale... nitamsamehe tu, nitafanyaje pindi kile nilikuwa na akili za kitoto*).” This depicts a shifting horizon of fear based on lived experiences.

Unlike most of the other adolescent girls, Somoe does not consider sex an important aspect in a sexual partnership. For instance, she never had sex with her previous boyfriend despite that he insisted. She always made sure that a friend accompanied her whenever she went to meeting him at his home. Given the importance that most boys place on sex, it is possible that the boyfriend could no longer withstand abstinence, which is why he cheated on her.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, she receives gift from her boyfriend, and she singled out ice cream as one of the gifts. As for the risk dimensions, she still fears being cheated on (*kumfumania na mwanake mwingine*). She is also avoiding pregnancy and would abort in case she got pregnant because she does not want her parents to know about the relationship. As depicted in chapter five, Somoe was once punished by her parents for her sexual activities and since then she knows how to conceal them.

***Ashura: May be he was attracted by my school uniform (portrait 7.1, see also portrait 6.4)***

Recollecting how she entered into a sexual relationship for the first time, Ashura narrated to me that she was fourteen years old, had already undergone puberty (*nimeshavunja ungo*) and was in her last year of primary school when she *decided* to enter into a sexual relationship. For the first time she met the partner with whom she came to cohabit near the shop where she was regularly sent to buy things. This is where she says, “having been sexually attracted, he seduced me (*ndipo akaniambia baada ya kunitamani*)”.

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<sup>131</sup> It is tempting to assume that Somoe would probably fit well with Hussein who is also not so much into sex when in a sexual partnership. But this would ignore the inter-subjective logic of joint or shared action, namely, that the latter is not based on sameness but differences (see Blumer 1966).



Reflecting on the current situation of the relationship, Ashura feels that her boyfriend no longer felt the same for her, here she remarks, “I don’t know, maybe he was attracted by my school uniform (*sijui alitamani sketi ya shule*)”. Like many other girls, Ashura did not accept the proposal of the then potential partner straight away, but he consistently followed her almost everyday on her way from school and in the evenings when she went to the shop. According to Ashura the follow up went along with the potential partner’s efforts to entertain her with gifts, small sums of money and promises of marriage after finishing school. In this respect, she recounts,

...so that boy got attracted to me and told me a lot of enticing words and convinced me (*alinishawishi*) with promises that he would marry me after I finish my schooling. He also insisted that we will have our own life and that he will not forsake me (*hatanisahau*). And as you see, I was living with my grandmother who was not capable, that is how I actually found myself trapped (*nikajikuta naingia kwenye mtego*)...

What Ashura is trying to convey is that the partner’s clandestine promises made sense to her as she tried to recast them in relation to her living conditions and everyday life experiences. In concrete terms, Ashura attests,

...you see he enticed me with some money in the tune of five hundred (TZS) as I walked to school in the morning. Instead of buying ice cream and snacks at school, I kept the money and bought maize flour (*unga*) and prepared a meal for me and my grandmother (...) I could also cater to other needs because my grandmother had no means at all (*hana uwezo wowote*). She could not buy clothes and soap for me, so the money from the boyfriend proved to be very helpful for me and my grandmother...

Inasmuch as she was afraid, she already had heard and observed from friends about the advantages of having a boyfriend. At the same time, the gifts and promises projected the image of a better life in contrast to what she was presently going through. To show that she never entered a sexual relationship easily, it took Ashura one month to accept the boy’s proposal of dating. In that month, Ashura engaged in a series of reflections and judgments, as she puts it, “It took me one month thinking about it (*nilikaa mwezi mmoja nafikiria*).” Ashura accepted the proposal with the anticipation for more gifts, assistance and relief as she asserts, “I saw to it that (...) it is better I accept him with hopes for relief (*nikaona bora...nimkubalie naweza kuwa na nafuu*).”

At this point, Ashura was not preoccupied with potential risks in the expert's sense as she says, "I never thought about the possibility of getting pregnant (*sikuwa nafikiria kama naweza kupata mimba*) even though I had heard of the sexual and reproductive health messages at school." In addition, Ashura says, "now for me when he was availing me with small money I was more concerned with the life at home, that is all (*sasa mimi alivyokuwa anaipa visenti kama vile nikawa naangalia maisha ya nyumbani jinsi yalilvyo basi*)".

Her main concern and attention was on the possibility of securing basic needs such as food, clothes and soap. Perhaps the potential risk for her at that moment was to lose the boyfriend who had opened up hope for the present and the future. It took her two more weeks after accepting before she had sex with him. During the two weeks Ashura received even more gifts and cash from him. In fact, the day when she had sex with him for the first time, she had been invited to collect a special gift. This means that she never thought about sex, but the special gift, though she knew that she would for sure have sex with him at some point in their relationship. Thus, it came as a surprise, which, however, should not be confused with being forced to do it, as she herself asserts, "so I found myself doing sex with him (*nikajikuta nafanya nae mapenzi*)."

In this case, spontaneity and uncertainty surrounded the sexual act. Whereas Ashura did not anticipate it on that day but in the near future, the boyfriend, apart from imagining about it, was not only uncertain whether Ashura would show up but also whether she would agree.<sup>132</sup> Being her first experience of sexual intercourse (sexual debut), Ashura was worried about the pain she would have to endure, along with bleeding.<sup>133</sup> Rather than asking her grandmother, as one might assume from the intergenerational dominant discourse, she asked her friend who cleared her worries by normalizing the situation, saying that, "it is normal (*akasema ni kawaida*)."

Subsequently, Ashura met regularly with her boyfriend. Because the two did not have mobile phones, they normally met after

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<sup>132</sup> In a few other cases, a sexual partnership does not involve sexual intercourse. While in other situation the girls would prolong the time to have sex through unfulfilled promises. Boys complain that this is usually more the case for girls who are still virgins because they are often worried (see portrait 6.3).

<sup>133</sup> Other girls did not feel much pain, neither did they see blood. Leila (portrait 6.5) is a case at hand.

school hours on her way home and they would arrange to meet for sex and leisure at her boyfriend's place, especially at the weekends.

***Habiba: To be cared for in everything (portrait 7.2)***

The aim of this portrait is to shed light on what an adolescent girl engaging in multiple partnerships can expect from different partners. In addition, it shows how such a girl strives to motivate the partners to meet her expectations. Equally important, the portrait points to the risk dimensions for an adolescent, within and across the partnerships. Habiba, an eighteen-year-old girl with secondary education lives with her two sisters in the house of their late parents. One of the sisters works at a radio station in Mtwara Town. Habiba feels that no one cares about her stuff. In this sense, she points to the fact that she is not restricted to any large degree. For instance, when she comes home late, Habiba does not have to explain as is the case for most girls; usually the house-girl opens the door for her. As regards her sexual practices, Habiba has had several multiple partners along with one or two committed or "regular" partners. The casual partnerships in her case could also last for months. Thus, her sexual biography shows that Habiba started engaging in sexual activities when she was still in secondary school. Since then she has initiated several relationships and ended many others. Though she admires girls without or with only one boyfriend, she feels that it is not easy for her because she is not used to having just one boyfriend (*sijazoea*).

During our second visit, Habiba had two "permanent" partners; whereas one was working at a radio station in Mtwara Town as a DJ, the other was based in Masasi. She also had several casual partners in and outside of town. During the third visit, Habiba, who also happened to be a close friend of my field assistant, told us that she had met a partner from Mozambique via a "wrong number" which she received on her mobile phone. The potential partner followed up on her with further calls and they agreed to exchange photos on facebook. He also promised to visit her in Mtwara Town.

Things had changed by the fourth visit. Habiba had broken up with the DJ and established a new sexual partnership with another man from one of the famous clubs in

Mtwara Town. The club is also part of the company running the radio station where the DJ works. At the same time, she had a new partner in her neighborhood. During our fifth visit Habiba reported that the potential partner from Mozambique had come and the two had spent almost a week in a lodge. He brought her some gifts, including perfume, and left her some cash when he left, but promised to come back. Interestingly, the partner from Mozambique wanted a baby from her as she noted laughingly, "...can you imagine (...) he even wants me to bear a child for him (...) he should go to hell (*eti anataka nimzalie mototo...aende zake huko*).” After he had left, Habiba was in conflict with the other partner from the club, leading to a break-up. But she immediately entered into a new partnership with an accountant from the same club.

Upon the sixth visit, Habiba had rejected the accountant because he cheated on her with another girl, as she noted, "...he has dated another girl along with me (*amenichukulia demu mwingine*).” In fact, the partner cheated on her with her own friend and because of that Habiba not only fought (verbally) with her friend (*tumegombana*) but also broke up with the partner (*nikaachana nae*). This time she was approached by an official from the national agency for energy (TANESCO) based in Mtwara Town. At the same time she was getting along with the partner who is based in Masasi, a town located 150 km from Mtwara Town. According to her, the partner from TANESCO promised to finance any course for her at the vocational training college (VETA). Still, she had to commute to Masasi to see the other partner who sometimes followed her to Mtwara Town.

In our last conversation with Habiba, a year later, she recounted that at some point she broke up with the partner from TANESCO. She then engaged in a partnership with a friend of the partner from TANESCO who had been “chasing” her even before breaking up with his friend. In short, since then she has established five more partnerships and three were still active. Apparently, most of her partners were adults older than herself, and had more or less stable earnings. It is also important to note that Habiba is a fan of discos and she never misses a show or performance unless she is sick. Whenever, I visited nightclubs, she was there, sometimes alone, sometimes with friends, and in many other case with one of her partners. As such, this justifies her claim that she was seen for

the first time by most of her partners at a nightclub or some other leisure places. The few exceptions include the partner she met via the “wrong number” and the casual partner in her neighbourhood who is a close friend of her brother and regularly visits her home.

From a partner she expects care and support in every respect (*anijali kwa kila kitu*). In particular, she feels happy to be called or texted by a partner(s) frequently along with the romantic verbal messages as she notes, “I like my partner to quite often say that he loves me (*napenda aniambie mara kwa mara kwamba ananipenda*).” Equally important, she expects the partner(s) to provide her with money and gifts. When a partner(s) promises, or actually fulfills the expectations, Habiba wishes to be near him all the time. Accordingly, for the purpose of committing the partner to her, she offers him serious love (*kumpenda kwa dhiti*), which she expresses through satisfying him with sex and romantic words and texts. Sometimes Habiba travels to nearby towns such as Masasi and Lindi as well as faraway places such as Dar es Salaam to either escort a casual partner or temporarily cohabit with a relatively “regular” partner.<sup>134</sup>

The partners also press various demands on her. For example, whereas the one from Mozambique wanted to have a baby girl with her, the partner working at TANESCO wanted to marry her, and he even introduced her to his own mother. At times, more than one partner demands her, and she has to position herself so as to avoid collision. One of the tactics she employs is to deliberately set off a conflict with the partner whom she wants to avoid on that particular day or occasion. If she wants to spend time with a casual partner, she creates a conflict with her boyfriend, and she does the same if she does not want the casual partner to hold on to her.

In view of the above account along with her own confirmation, Habiba considers the following elements as risk dimensions in her sexual practices: collision of partners (*kugonganisha*), to be rejected by a partner while still in love (*Kuachwa*), and knowing

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<sup>134</sup> It seems that Habiba is well networked in and outside of town. She is known by many in town as an easy girl, an image that comes with negative connotations of prostitution but she finds ways to overcome this in her sexual practices. One way is linking up with strangers, draining money from partners to afford items of modernity, hence looking cute, and “going with the times” (*kwenda na wakati*).

that she is being cheated on (*kunichukulia demu mwingine*). To deal with the risks she keeps the sexual activities secret by giving lies to the partners, offers the partner(s) whatever they want, at least discursively, in order to satisfy them, but drops or rejects the partner, especially if she no longer has feelings for him (*kumuacha/achana nae*).

What is transparently clear in the portrait of Habiba is the fact that bio-medically defined risks such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections like HIV often do not prominently surface in the adolescent's horizon of fear in regards to their sexual lives. Although Habiba does not want to get pregnant at the moment, in one of our conversations, she noted that if she was really fertile she would have started child bearing. Questioning herself as to whether she is really fertile or not, hints to the fact that at times she neither uses a condom nor contraceptives.

Juxtaposing the above expectations and lived experiences of the girls against those of the boys sheds more light in our understanding of sexual inter-subjectivity among partners. In particular, the approach lays bare the motives that trigger certain sexual practices among adolescents. This is because inasmuch as girls' expectations diverge from that of the boys, and vice versa, there are several elements of convergence as I show in what follows, drawing on two cases of male adolescents: Ramadhan and Mustafa.

***Ramadhan: Imagining risks and striving to win the partner(s) (portrait 7.3)***

This portrait intends to show how a boy can imagine and deal with risk dimensions in a sexual partnership, on the one hand, and how he strives to incubate the partnership, on the other. Ramadhan, a seventeen-year-old boy living with his parents, has had three girlfriends since he started engaging in sexual activities at the age of fourteen. He fears much about making a girl pregnant and would certainly urge the girlfriend to abort, as he puts it, "...aah, I will force for an abortion (*aah, mimi nitalazimisha tuitoe tu*).” Reflecting on pregnancy, Ramadhan recounts, “I can't imagine bringing a pregnancy home while I myself am still a dependant there, I haven't even finished school then I bring the burden to my father, isn't that an issue? (...*hivi mimi nikileta ujauzito pale home wakati mimi mwenyewe sijamaliza kutegea pale home, wakati sijamaliza hata*

*shule halafu naleta mzungo kwa father, siyo ishuru hiyo?).” To that end, he uses condoms with all of his partners.*

Because he has multiple partners, he is also concerned about the collision of partners as he notes, “...imagine I am with one of the chicks (...) unexpectedly passes the other chick (...) then you are likely to cause a collision, and the situation can become problematic (...*labda unaongea naye, au demu wako mwingine hukutegemea unaongea naye kupita akapita kwa hiyo ukawa umegonganisha kwa hiyo kunakuwa na utata*).” Above all, he is even more careful about the possibility of the partner’s parent apprehending him, as he recounts, “it has never happened and I am very much afraid of it because (...) if it happens that you are talking to the chick, and then her parent catches you, there you will have problems (...*naogopa sana kwa sababu unaweza ukawa unaongea naye akapita labda mzazi wake akakukamata nini, ikawa una matatizo*).”

To commit the partner and make her less suspicious about his practice of cheating, Ramadhan provides her with what he refers to as the thing that she needs from him. In his own words he says,

...the things that she wants from me, I normally give them to her (*Vitu ambavyo anavihitaji toka kwangu mimi huwa nampatia*), because if she need something then you don’t provide her, then she sees that this guy must be cheating on me with another chick (*kwa sababu ukiwa anahitaji kitu fulani halafu wewe hukumpatia anaona huyu mtu atakuwa na dogo ambaye anachakachua chakachua*),so (...) I try my best to meet her needs (...) so I also try to ask her about her needs (*aha hakuna au kipo, niambie basi*), yeah that’s kind of things that I do (*ndio huwa nafanya vitu kama hivyo*).

As to how he mobilizes resources to cater to his partner’s needs, Ramadhan recounts, “you see when parents gives me pocket money and the fare to and from school, I often save some, and sometimes I simply go by foot (*wazazi hawa wanavyonigea hela kwa ajili ya shulen, huwaga naweka akiba (...) wakati mwingine nakomaa tu naenda kwa mguu shuleni*).” Thus, it takes some degree of determination and commitment to fulfill the demands of his partners.

***Mustafa: Shifts in sexual formations, expectations and risk dimensions (portrait 7.4)***

A snapshot of Mustafa's sexual biography highlights some of the complexities and dynamics in a male adolescent's sexual life. Specifically, it depicts some of the countless sexual practices enacted for different purposes at various stages of the formation of sexual partnership(s). Mustafa, a seventeen-year-old secondary schoolboy, is currently living with his uncle and aunt (sister to his late father), following the death of his father and mother. He is usually in his model jeans and a T-shirt, both when at home and going out. According to Mustafa the attire makes him look good (*kupendeza*) and appealing (*kuvutia*) in the eyes of others, including potential and current partner(s). His hobbies include listening to *bongo fleva* music (I come back to this point in the next chapter), chatting with friends (*kupiga story*) at common spaces for meeting and passing time (*kijiweni/maskani*) and interacting with his girlfriends. Mustafa is above all attracted to girls because of their sexual appeal in clothes, as he notes:

... actually what attracts me to the girls is their attire, eeh (...) when I see her looking good I kind of don't know what happens to me (...) especially when they appear in their sort of tight jeans that many prefer today (...) these attracts me, particularly the hips (...*kiukweli kinachonivuta mimi kwa wasichana mavazi Eeeh, nikishamuona amependeza yani sijui ninakuwaje...kuna taiti flani ambazo wanavaa ambazo huwa zinaonekana akipendeza ... mahips ndio yananivutia sana*).

When I met Mustafa for the first time he had five sexual partners. For him it was necessary to have multiple partners because, like David (see portrait 6.1), he says, "I see it is better in order to avoid headache (*kuumiza kichwa*). Just like Kaziga (portrait 6.2), Mustafa feels that he is more committed to one of them whom he could imagine marrying some time in the future (*naweza nikawa nae*). Surprisingly, this is the most recent girlfriend (*wa karibuni*). As to what moves him to privilege one partner over the other, Mustafa recounts, "... she seems to be sort of trustworthy compared to the others (*huyu kwa sababu ni mwanaminifu kidogo tofauti na hawa wengine*), because (...) she understands and follows what I instruct her (... *nikiongea nae nikimuelekeza usifanye hivi na hivi ananielewa tofauti na hawa wengine*)."

Grounding his reservation about the other partners in his quest for respectability based on masculinity, he noted, "... these others I used to warn them but they don't care (...) we quarrel about minor stuff, they want me to follow what they say (...*hawataki yaani wao*



*wanataka mimi niwasikilize hao kuliko wao kunisikiliza mimi...tunakorofishana vitu vidogo vidogo).*” By the fourth visit, Mustafa had broken up with one of his long-time girlfriends. This was because first he had heard from friends that she was cheating on him, but this time he saw it himself (*nilikutana nae mimi mwenyewe nikaona niachane nae*). By the sixth visit, Mustafa had broken up with the other three partners and was with the one to whom he felt committed, as he points out, “I have decided to reduce them one after the other and remain with only one (*nimeamua kuwapunguza mpaka amebakia mmoja*).” According to him, this was not only because the others were not committed and submissive to him, but also due to the incentives emanating from the dutiful partner who, as I show later, managed to contain Mustafa so much so that he is not worried about *headaches* anymore.

Recollecting how he first met and approached his first girlfriend, Mustafa narrates,

It was around eight at night (...) as I was just walking by (*katika pita pita zangu*) I found there was a disco show at a wedding ceremony in the neighborhood (...) I realized there were many girls (*nikaangalia nakuta kumejaa jaa wasichana*) so I went there (...) she was there, so I tried to propose to her (*...nikaenda pale nayeye nikamkuta, kwa hiyo ikabidi nimuelekeze tu*).

As he probably expected, the potential partner did not accept his proposal right away but promised to think about it. How things transpired Mustafa notes, “she had rejected in the first place but later told me to give her time to think over and promised to find me when she has the answer (...) but she never looked for me (*aliniambia subiri kwanza nifikirie, ila pale pale alishachomoa, alikataa, kwa hiyo ngojea nifikirie fikirie nitakutafuta kwa hiyo akawa hajanitafuta nini*).” After a week, Mustafa decided to follow up as he says,

...I decided to start looking for her because I had frequented the place where we agreed to meet in vain (*Eeh! sasa mimi nikaanza kumtafuta yeye... mimi kwendapale simkuti ....kwenye kona hapo tulipokuwa tunakutana kutana akiwa anaenda tuition, kwamba mimi nikimsubiri pale*). At first, I positioned myself on the way near the place where she was going for “tuition” (*...nikaenda tuition alipokuwa anasoma nikawa nimesubiri njiani*), I then saw her but she was with other girls so I could not approach her (...) at the end of the day, I met her just on the road, and asked her for the response but she was like she didn’t remember anything (*...nikawa nimemuona sasa akawa na wenzake, nikampita tu .... mwisho wa siku nakutana nae tu barabarani...ananza kubadilika ananiuliza kwani unasemaje*)...

Reflecting on how he judged the negative response from a potential partner, like many other boys, Mustafa said,

...the girls are like that, they make you suffer as a test to see your commitment (...) some of us have the privilege in terms of talking with them as we are equipped with skills acquired through being in the company of experienced fellows (...*inakuwa kukusumbua wewe tu kujua wewe uko vipi ...kweli wewe umempania, kama kweli wewe unampenda...sisi wengine kwenye kukongea ongea tupo tupo kwa sababu tunatembea na watu ambao wanatufundisha fundisha mambo haya*).

Basically, the above passages reiterate that there is a certain degree of understanding among the actors about what is expected of them at this stage of a sexual encounter. Validating this point further, Mustafa said, "... so when she seemed to change her attitude, I started begging on her (*kumbembeleza*) while appealing to her sympathy (...*kwa unyonge atakuwa anakuonea huruma*), so she then accepted." From there, Mustafa had to continue chasing her in order to have sex with her because for him it made no sense to be in a partnership without sex. In this regard he says,

...I expected to have sex with (...) that was my major interest (*mimi natarajia kufanya nae mapenzi ...kwa kweli ndilo tarajio kubwa*) you know I also would feel jealous not to have sex with her because I will see like she has someone else (...) as it is the case for most of the girls today (...*mimi nikiwa naishi na msichana kiukweli nina hali fulani ya wivu umeona....nitaona kama ana mtu ... kwa sababu wengi sana ndio wapo hivyo, msichana wa sasa hivi...*).

In short, it took four months for Mustafa to have sex with his first partner and he confirms that, "actually that was the girl who kept me in suspense for much longer (...*alinizungusha sana, kiukweli katika niliopata nao taabu huyu nilipata nae tabu sana*)." For him that was because she was still a virgin, so she was more afraid. As to what happened so that the girlfriend finally accepted to have sex with him, Mustafa boasted,

... you see I am good in sort of words to lure girls (...) I convinced her that "I had bought a gift for you it is inside let us go (...) don't worry I cant do anything bad to you" (... *sema mimi nina maneno maneno kidogo ya kumdanganya msichana lazima ...kuna zawadi nimekuandalia halafuiko ndani nimeiweka kwa hiyo twende ukachukue, usiogope siwezi kufanya kitu chochote..*)

Acknowledging his commitment to the partner following her acceptance to have sex with him despite the fact that he later had multiple partners, Mustafa admits,

... actually I based so much on her because she pleaded to me that I should not abandon her and things like that (...) I assured her that I wont leave or betray her (...) you know I felt touched because I was the one who removed her virginity (...) it has been difficult to

forget her...(*...nilikuwa nao wengine, hata kama nilibase sana kwake yeye sababu ... aliniambia kwamba wewe usiniache...nini na nini... mimi nikamwambia mim sitakuacha, sitakusaliti kwa sababu mimi ndio nimetoa nanii yake...*)

### ***The current sexual partnership: Mustafa's turning point in sexual life***

Mustafa first saw his current partner at Ushirika, a club preferred by adolescents for its comparatively cheap entry fee. On the four occasions that I happened to be at the club there was a birthday party followed by a disco show. Sometimes there are simply disco shows with a DJ. Mustafa saw the then potential partner who was also attending the party, as he recounts,

...this one I met one day at Ushirika (...) after dancing, at the time of going out...I saw her in the company of her friend (...) I was also with my friends and told them that I have fallen in love with her and would like to chase her, what can we do (...) they said we wait for you but don't be late...(*huyu kuna siku flani nilimuona ushirika...mda wa kutoka ule tumeshacheza cheza mziki...mimi natoka nje namuona yeye...yupo na mwenzake sasa mimi...nilikuwa na wenzangu, bwana mimi nimempenda nataka kumfuatilia, sasa tufanyaje? ...sisi tutakusubiri...basi usichelewe*).

Just as in the case of his first partnership, the potential partner did not accept his proposal. Even though this was expected on the part of his friends, Mustafa did not want them to question his competence in approaching girls (*kutongoza*) as he expresses, "...I approached her (...) to be honest she just ignored me (*alinipuuzia kiukweli*) but I lied to my friends and said that she gave me a promising response (*nilidanganya ameniambia hivi na hivi*).” However, says Mfaume, “one of the friends told me that he knew the girl (*...katika marafiki zangu hawa akasema mim namjua yule*), and that they study at the same school (...) so I admitted that I love the girl and asked him to help me with further follow up (*...basi utanifanyia mapande pande fulani kwa sababu mimi nimempenda*).”

Coincidentally, Mustafa's friend also happened to live in the same neighbourhood as the potential partner and so he turned out to be the perfect “go-between” for Mustafa and the partner to be. In this respect, Mustafa attests,

...my friend lives close to her neighbourhood (*anaka nae mtaa ya pale plae jirani*), so (...) he promised to pay me a visit together with her (*...akanifanyia fanyia mipango hiyo akasema basi nitakuja kukutembelea pamoja na demu mwenyewe...*). Then it was on a Saturday my friend notified me that the chick would come around my neighbourhood ...so I should be prepared (*...ilikuwa siku ya jumamosi ndio akaja*

*nyumbani, na jamaa alikuja kunikonyeza yule dogo wa siku ile anakuja leo, kwa hiyo kama vipi jiandae andae)...*

In his preparations, Mustafa made special efforts to look good in his attire, as he noted,

*...so I had to kind of look good (nikapendeza pendeza) and waited at masikani hitting the story (talking to other colleagues), indeed, after a while I saw the chick passing by, and my friend told me hey! here she comes! Let me follow her (...), he asked her to meet me then he came after me saying that she is waiting for me (tunapiga piga stori, kweli baada ya muda namuona dogo anapita ...basi ngoja mimi nimfuatilie...bwana msihikaji anataka kuongea na wewe...jamaa kaja akaniambia dogo anakusubiri wewe), then I went to talk to her...*

This time it was perhaps clear in Mustafa's mind that the partner had already made up her mind but he needed a confirmation from her. Interestingly, he paid attention to both verbal and bodily responses as described in the following excerpt,

*...I went and sort of talked to her but she was just kind of biting her fingers without talking anything (...), later on she simply said ok I want to go home now, I have understood you (...) then I said ok let me accompany you (...) on the way I went on pleading to her (...) before she agreed and said (...) but I want you to be faithful not running around if I get to hear (...) it will be over between me and you (...) then I told her that "you should not be worried (...) because I have fallen in love with you (...) I shall do as you wish.." (...akajing'atang'ata tu minaongea yeye haongei chochote anajing'atang'ata vidole tu... mara akasema sasa basi minataka niende nyumbani, nimeshakulewa nataka niende nyumbani (...) basi nikusindikize njiani huko tukazidi kuongea tu...uwe mwaminifu siyo wa kudanda hapa na hapa mimi nikisikia ndio mwisho mimi na wewe.... nikamwambia basi sawa hakuna tatizo, kwa vile mimi nimekupenda...itabid nitulie tu kama ulivyonikubali...).*

Now that the partner approved of Mustafa's proposal it was time for him to feed confidence into his partner and motivate her to have sex with him in order to prove her commitment. It required from Mustafa an insistent follow-up (*kufuatilia/kufukuzia*) and much pleading (*kumbembeza*). According to Mustafa, the partner's reluctance was grounded in her past experience of *kutendwa*, to which he testified a similar experience, as he puts it,

*She repeatedly said to me that "because I have once been cheated on I will never fall in love again" and that kind of stuff (...) but I pleaded and showed her that I also was once cheated on (...) which is why fate has joined us with a similar experience (...) so we shall be committed to our love ... (...kwa sababu nilishawahi kutendwa sitawahi kuja kupenda, hivi na hivi, mimi nikambembeza nikamuelekeza hata mimi nimeshawahi kutendwa vile vile ndio maana nimekutafuta wewe kwa hiyo wote tumeshawahi kutendwa basi tutakuwa waaminifu katika penzi letu...).*

Although this time it took less longer than with the first partner, it was not possible to have sex until one and a half months after the partner's approval to date him. He attributes the shorter interval between dating and having sex to three reasons, namely: the collective effort from the friend who studied with his partner (*hakuchelewa kivile... rafiki yangu ananipigia pande*); the partner was older than him so she did not fear after deciding (*...alikuwa mkubwa yeye form three mimi form one*); and improvement on his own sexual skills and competence (*mimi kidogo nilikuwa uzoefu zoefu...nikiongea jambo analifikiria sana kitu ambacho nakuwa nakiongea*).

Gift exchange practices have greatly changed for Mustafa from giving more gifts to partners in the past to receiving more gifts from his current partner. This does not mean that the previous partners gave him no gifts at all, rather the frequency and types of gifts that he receives today have changed significantly. Mustafa used to receive and give what he calls small gifts (*zawadi tu ndogo ndogo*) like flowers (*maua*), Valentine day and birthday cards (*kadi kadi hizi*) which he showed me in his room when I asked to see them (*makadi kadi yapo mengi sana ghetto*). While he considers that giving gifts to a partner helps to convince and commit her, at least temporarily (*vizawadi vinamdanganya*), he feels being cared about when he receives gifts from a partner (*anaonyesha kujali*).

Because his school is not far from home, he does not get money for transport like Ramadhan (portrait 7.3). The window of opportunity that he uses to get some money from parents is mainly through asking for money to contribute to the parties his friends invite him to. In this regard he attests, "...yeah, if I am invited to participate in parties at my friend's home (...) normally there is a certain amount to be offered as a gift (...) so the guardians I live with usually provide me with that (*...hivyo kama kwenda kwenye mapati mapati ya rafiki zangu labda inafanyika kwao kwa hiyo lazima kuna kiasi cha hela hapo ambacho huwa kinatoka kwa hiyo walezi ambao nakaa nao mimi huwa wananipa*). In this case Mustafa pays a little bit towards the contributions, which are often not fixed, and saves some for entertaining his partners(s).

As for the current partner, Mustafa feels that she is more committed to him and she expresses care and love, not only through gifts but also by means of a little money, a practice commonly known as *kuhonga*. He thus considers the partner as giving more to him compared to what he gives to her (...*wala siyo mimi namuhonga yeye, yeye ndio ananihonga mimi, umeona eehe*). This challenges the the economic/poverty discourses, which assume that girls enter into sexual partnerships for mere economic reasons (UNICEF 2011, cf. Wamoyi et al. 2011). Thus, an important question here is, where does she get the money from? Mustafa clarifies by referring to her family background to show that she gets money from her parents within the framework of pocket and transport money. This takes into account that her school is far from home. Specifically, Mustafa affirms, “her father is a soldier and her mother works in a public office (...) she studies far from home (...) so quite often she is given money (*baba yake mwanajeshi ila mama yake mambo ya ofisini ofisini tu...yeye si anasoma mbali kwa hiyo mda wote yey ni mtu wa kuppewa pewa hela*).”

On one of the visits, Mustafa expressed how he was touched by the recent gift of a shirt that his girlfriend had bought for him, especially because it was the first time in his sexual life that a partner had bought him clothes. In addition, he also feels that it is not common even among his peers as he recounts in one of the conversations (while putting on the “special shirt”),

...just imagine this shirt(...) she went out to the market, searched and bought it (...) then without calling her, she came by herself to my friend's ghetto where we often meet, wrapped the shirt in gift paper ... this is my first time for a girl to buy me a cloth to give me as a surprise (...*hebu fikiria alienda kwenye mnada mwenyewe akachangua anininunulia...mwenyewe bila kumuita...akafunga kwenye karatasi akatia kwenye mfuko akafunga akaja pale nini moja kwa moja nilikuwa ndani kwa mshikaji yule.... eeh hii ndio mara ya kwanza kwa msichana kuninulia nguo...*).

In addition, Mustafa is impressed by the frequent communication from his partner as he notes, “a day cannot pass without sending me text messages or calling me (...) since I don't often call her she never asks why I don't call her (...) at times she sends me airtime (*hamna siku ipite hivi hivi bila yeye kunitumia message au mimi kumpigia simu kwa sababu mimi simu yangu mara nyingi huwa simpigiii ...na haniulizi kwa nini hunipigii...mda mwingine kama simu yangu ina hela au ananirushia*).”

Consequently, Mustafa feels that it is a great risk for him to loose the current partner given the care and commitment she has expressed to him as he puts it; "...it will pain me (*itaniuma sana*) and would be envious to the fellow who wins her knowing how he will enjoy having her (...*mimi nitakuwa namuonea wizu mwenzangu ambae atakuwa naye...*)".

### ***Dealing with pregnancy: From condom to withdrawal***

Mustafa is also concerned with avoiding pregnancy because it would force him to quit schooling, either because he would have to strive to provide for the child or run away from the authorities to avoid being charged/jailed, or both. For the time being, he cannot imagine dropping out of school as he recounts,

...I am very careful (...) nothing is fearful for me like pregnancy (...) it's fine if I contract a disease but not pregnancy (...*nakuwa makini sana...hakuna kitu ninachoogopa kama mimba ...unipe ugonjwa na namna yoyote ila mimba*). You see she is a student (*mwanafunzi*), I am also a student (...) we are all students, that is a very serious case (*hiyo ni kesi kubwa sana*) I am only in form two (...) in case I make her pregnant (...*mimi sasa nikisema nimpe ujauzito*), I will by any means have to drop school, now with my age, leaving school, I don't yet know how things will turn out (*mimi nitasema lazima niache shule kwa vyovyote vile kwa sababu mimi kwa umri huu nilionao niache shule na sijajua ni vipi ...*).

In his efforts to avoid pregnancy in the previous as well as current sexual partnership(s), Mustafa points out that he had used a condom only once in the past, but did not like it. His experience did not motivate him to use it again as it denied him sexual pleasure. In situations when a partner insisted that he used a condom, he would start with one and remove it in the process. For him, when a girl wants a condom to be used, she is safe, and the other way round. Thus, to simultaneously attain sexual pleasure and avoid pregnancy, he opts for withdrawing just before ejaculation. In this regards he narrates;

...honestly, I used protection only once but did not feel any taste and became so difficult for me. Girls push for it but I myself kind of resist (...) if a girl forces you to use a condom straight away you elevate her as safe. I can also decide to put on the condom but later when you see she is sort of into it you simply remove it. But I am very careful to withdraw when I feel myself something like...( *kiukweli nimewahi kutumia kinga siku moja ila sikuona radha ya aina yoyote...inakuwa vigumu sana kwangu mimi.Sasa wale ndio walikuwa wananishauri nitumie kinga ila sasa mimi mwenyewe mbishimbishi.....Kwa sababu msichna akakuambia tumia kinga moja kwa moja anakuwa na auaminifu kwako.....naweza nikachukua kinga nikawa nimevaa ila baadae unapoona mtu amekung'anga'ania anapwitapwita hivi na hivi si natoa tu .....mimi mwenyewe nakuwa makini sana ninapotaka kufanya tendo kwa sababu kuna*

*mda flani huwa najisikia kitu flani natoa kwanza natulia kwanza nikishaona hali yangu ).*

In sum, Mustafa's sexual biography indicates temporal shifts from one sexual partnership to multiple sexual relationships, and back to a sexual "dyad". In all cases, Mustafa is making either responsive or proactive engagements, or both, in relation to his shifting horizon of hopes and fears as regards the respective partnership(s).

### **7.3 Summary**

The above empirical evidences validate that as social actors, adolescents have a stake/interests in a sexual partnership(s). Apparently, in the processes of enacting sexual practices, adolescents build on habitual and new experiences in their own relationships, and on everyday life situations and dynamics in both expectations and practices. In addition, they draw on experiences of other actors from within their settings such as relatives, friends and neighbours, and beyond through mass media. Importantly, adolescents, both male and females, do not simply wait for their expectations to be fulfilled, but (pro)actively do something to induce or create necessity and commitment on the side of the partner.

By implication, the constructions of sexual and reproductive risks from the perspectives of adolescents go beyond of the biomedical parameters of risk dimensions, especially STIs and HIV. For instance, teenage pregnancy may or may not constitute a risk. Whenever it does, the parameters taken diverge from the conventional measures although certain elements can converge. What is hard to ignore, however, is that in the course of avoiding, or dealing with, one risk dimension, adolescents find it inevitable to confront or encounter other risk dimensions.



## 8. SOCIAL SPACES FOR ADOLESCENTS' SEXUAL PRACTICES

It is perhaps clear by now that adolescents' premarital sexual practices in Mtwara Town are subject to multiple restrictions enacted by different actors and social institutions. At the same time, those very sexual practices are not just cherished by many adolescents but also backed up by other social actors and institutions. Inherent in this tension is a rather significant, though rarely reflected on, reality that (social) space for adolescent premarital sexual practices is usually never given, but created by the young people in question. Thus, the key question in this chapter is how an adolescent creates space(s) for enacting the "forbidden" sexual practice without necessarily upsetting the seemingly constraining structures.

Based on a critical understanding of agency and creativity, it is argued that the social spaces for adolescents' sexual practices are enmeshed or interwoven in the common activities, roles, places and events in which the respective adolescents participate in the course of their everyday lives. For the presentation, rather than introducing new cases, I rely on the lived experiences portrayed in chapters six, seven and eight, with a particular focus on the actors' "tactics" for space creation. This allows for links between the four chapters on the findings of the present study.

In the social sciences, since the second half of the twentieth century, notions of (social) space<sup>135</sup> have attracted fresh attention from scholars going beyond its physical and spatial dimensions as well as disjunctive representation. The shift has been echoed in several disciplines and I should highlight but a few works: in sociology (Bourdieu, 1984, Lefebvre 1991, Granovetter 2001); in geography (Kelly 2000, Johnston and Longhurst 2009); in economics (Storr 2008); in psychology (Kreijns et al. 2004); in history (de Certeau 1984); and in anthropology (Appadurai 1986, 1996, Hannerz 1987, Rosaldo

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<sup>135</sup> The concept of social space is said to have first been articulated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (see Buttimer 1969, Kreijns et al. 2004).

1989, Malkki 1989, Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997).<sup>136</sup> Especially in anthropology, the shift has been partly triggered by the waves of social and cultural transformations following the processes of globalization that have challenged the utility of the anthropological orthodox conception of culture and society (see Gupta and Ferguson 1992).<sup>137</sup> On other hand, it has been explained with reference to the renewed interest in theorizing space among postmodernists (see, for example, Foucault 1982, Jameson 1984, Baudrillard 1988) and feminists (for example. Martin and Mohanty 1986, Kaplan 1987).

To critically reflect on the notion of (social) space, and extend it to the anthropology of adolescence, particularly in medical anthropology, I engage with some of the above-mentioned sources. Specifically, I follow de Certeau's conception of space as transformed pre-established configurations (1984). This is relevant to the current analysis because it stresses the ability of actors to creatively transcend socially constructed boundaries in the context of their everyday life. As such, it fits very well with the conceptual framework adapted in the present study, especially as regards the creativity of adolescents' sexual actions.

In his seminal work *The practice of everyday life* (1984), de Certeau distinguishes between "spaces" and "places" (1984: 117). For him, place entails the order according to which "elements are distributed in relationship of coexistence." Thus, says de Certeau, "the law of the proper, rules in the place". Hence, he arrives at the conclusion that a place is "an instantaneous configuration of positions" and inherently implying "stability".

On the other hand, space according to de Certeau is constituted with "intersections of mobile" or flexible "elements". Invoking both temporal and relational dimensions in space, he further argues that the formation of space is embedded in "the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual

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<sup>136</sup> For an overview of recent trends in the anthropological conceptualization of space, see Gupta and Ferguson's (1992) *Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference*.

<sup>137</sup> For a compressed review of anthropological theorization of the "flows" and social cultural transformation, see Kearney's (1995) *The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism*.

programs or contractual proximities”. Unlike place, space lacks the stability of a “proper” (de Certeau 1984: 117). Accordingly, de Certeau sums up that “*space is a practiced place*” (italics in the original). Put in other words, actors confined in places can transform the latter into spaces. In concrete terms, in relation to the question at issue in the present chapter, most adolescents in Mtwara Town transform homes, streets, schools/schooling, neighbourhood, and leisure places, just to mention a few, into spaces for premarital sexual practices.

In what follows, I demonstrate with empirical details that adolescents “manipulate” (agentic manipulation) both mundane and rare opportunities within the pre-established structures, and beyond. These include domestic obligations, schooling, holidays, parties, and festivities, paying visits to relatives, friendship, family structures, living arrangements and conditions, religious values and activities, parents’ obligations, and media, in general, and social media, in particular. I end the chapter with a summary of how adolescents situationally improvise and create interwoven social spaces.

### **8.1 Agentic “manipulation” of roles in and outside of the home spheres**

In the Tanzanian context – and most likely elsewhere in Africa – notions of home (*nyumbani*) in relation to parents and children invoke physical, spatial, social and temporal dimensions of belonging. Perhaps the Swahili term *nyumbani* for home denotes the first two dimensions clearer than the English word (home). *Nyumbani* is composed of the noun *nyumba*, which means “house”, and transformed into an adjective, *nyumbani* (home), by the suffix *ni*. In their treatise of notions of home and homeless as well as the paradoxes of “home-making”, Rapport and Overing (2007: 173-180) observe that except as a synonym for “house” or “household” the term “home” was not prominent in traditional anthropological conceptualization. Generally speaking, home was understood as stable physical space and place. Douglass (1992: 290) suggested that the beginning of “home” marked bringing space under control and thus giving domestic life a physical orientation or “directions of existence”.

Recently, however, following a series of social transformations that have not left domestic life unaltered, a broader understanding of home beyond the Durkheimian conceptions of solidary communities and coercive institutions has been called for by anthropologists. Following Minh-ha (1994), Rapport and Overing (2007: 175) suggest that a credible understanding of home in the contemporary world ought to focus “less on routinization of space and time than with their fluidity, and with individuals’ continuous movement through them.” Indeed, the present analysis of how adolescents creatively manipulate roles in and outside of the domestic spheres in order to enact sexual practice contributes to the much needed contemporary anthropological understanding of “home”.<sup>138</sup>

Basically, the home spheres as social spaces presuppose webs of social relationships between its members. As reiterated throughout the present thesis, adolescents belong to families, communities and societies. Being members of families, most adolescents belong to a home(s) in which they are assigned roles as part of their socialization into responsible, respectable and worthy children, and future adults. Indeed, conventional discourses in their modern sense, suggest that due to their immaturity, adolescents ought to be protected under the patronage of home and school. Inherent in these discourses is the assumption that adolescents’ “deviant” social practices are easily controlled through surveillance by parents and teachers (see De Boeck and Honwana 2005). In terms of sexuality for example, which is viewed as harmful or dangerous to the adolescents, home and school are considered as “safe zones” for most adolescents as far as the conventional discourses are concerned. The lived experiences of adolescents in Mtwara Town, however, are both in line and at variance with the mentioned assumption or ideal. In what follows, I scrutinize various ways through which adolescents turn their own and their parents’ social roles and obligations into opportunities of sexual practice.

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<sup>138</sup> For a fascinating overview of anthropological perspectives on domestic space with a focus on the Western societies, see Cieraad’s (1999) edited volume *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*.

### *Transforming domestic obligations into spaces*

As repeatedly recounted by most girls and boys, shopping or being sent to buy things from shops (*dukani*) or markets (*sokoni*) provides space for them to see or to be seen, to meet and interact with either potential or current partner(s), or both.<sup>139</sup> Since it is common for most families to buy items on retail, and usually on a daily basis,<sup>140</sup> opportunities to be sent to the shop or market open up quite often. Essentially, from the perspective of parents or guardians, the purpose of sending a girl or a boy to do the shopping is to allow her or him to participate in domestic affairs as part of socializing the respective adolescent into a responsible member of a particular family. Moreover, it is part of the “respect” package in the sense that compliance to the orders of parents, guardians and elders adds to the valued normative expressions of obedience (*adabu*), discipline (*nidhamu*), respect and social worth.

What is intriguing though is the fact that along with the compliance with parents’ orders, adolescents introduce a different purpose, one that is often not endorsed by the parents, into the acceptable activities and places. This points to creativity in the sense of improvisation and agentic potential on the part of the respective adolescents. In empirical terms, one or more sexual activities can take place in the lapse of time between home and the shop or market. Specifically, adolescents can meet, make appointments, exchange gifts, caress, hug, kiss, or (and) even have sex during that period.

Through observation at shops and markets and participation in the shopping activities in Mtwara Town, it became clear to me that many boys were hanging around the shops, especially in the evening, while girls were buying utilities ranging from soaps, cooking oil, sugar, salt, to maize flour and rice. Of course some boys were also buying things from shops. Quite often boys would follow the girls or position themselves on the paths (*kutega mingo/kufukuzia*) so that they could interact with the (potential) partner(s),

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<sup>139</sup> Other similar opportunities include fetching water and firewood, especially in semi-urban and rural areas.

<sup>140</sup> This is partly due to meagre and unreliable earnings, partly because of the need to budget the minimal income obtained by maintaining the belief that there is not enough in the house. In addition, many households do not own storage facilities like refrigerators.

especially in the evening when it was getting dark. It is not uncommon to see adolescents, just like adults, walking, sitting or standing in pairs.



Plate 8.1: Adolescents in a conversation at a popular shopping area ©2011Sambaiga

There are small shops (*kiosk*) and vending points (*magenge*) in most neighbourhoods. Major shopping areas with many shops and mini-supermarkets are mainly at Bima, Maduka makubwa and around Mashujaa stadium. Another common shopping place is the main market (*soko kuu*) in town, located in the Sokoni area around Chikongola adjacent to the main bus stop (*stendi*). Here a wide-range of items is sold, including food, clothes, household assets, domestic utilities and cosmetics. The place is preferred because of the wide variety of items and relatively low prices compared to *madukani* (shops), kiosks and *magengeni* (vending points). Apparently, some adolescents are either sent by parents or just come to buy their own stuff, such as clothes or cosmetics, even from distant places such as Mikindani and Naliendele.

Equally important are the evening markets mainly selling food items, such as cooked food, fried fish, fried potatoes with or without eggs or chicken (*chips mayai/kuku*), porridge, burns/snacks and fresh fruits, to mention but a few. Among the popular evening markets in Mtwara Town include, Bima, Stendi and Magomeni Mkanaredi. The majority of the vendors are women and girls, along with some men and boys. Here it is not difficult to see sexual encounters between boys/men and girls/women.

### ***Schooling as a social space: the walks or travels to and from school or “tuition”***

Schooling as a social practice has received less attention of scholars in the understanding adolescent sexuality except when it comes to school dropouts due to teenage pregnancy (Puja and Kassimoto 1994, Lloyd et al. 2008, UNICEF 2011). Furthermore, although with some exceptions (Plummer et al. 2007, Nnko and Pool 1997, Dilger 2003), many studies focusing on sexual and reproductive health of in-school adolescents in Tanzania, concentrate on measuring the association between levels of education and the famous public health triplets, namely, knowledge, attitudes and practices as regards sexual and reproductive health risks from the experts’ perspectives (see for example, Matasha et al. 1998, Masatu et al. 2003). This deterministic understanding of the link between education and so-called “sexual behaviours” is not only challenged by the lived experiences but has also attracted criticism from ethnographically grounded studies (see, for example, Johnson-Hanks 2006).

In this section I show how schooling, particularly the walks or (and) travels to and from school or *tuition*, can open spaces for adolescents to engage in sexual activities. As noted earlier, schooling has increasingly gained prominence in Mtwara Town along with the popular imaginary of *education is key to better life*. As underlined earlier in chapter four, enrolment of boys and girls in both primary and secondary schools have skyrocketed since the 1990s (see table 4.1). It is thus clear that most parents and communities have somehow responded positively to the efforts by the state, NGOs (both national and international) and even religious institutions to keep children and adolescents in schools.<sup>141</sup> In practical terms, parents, even those who are regarded to be very restrictive and constitute a *gate kali* (strong gate) case, find it necessary to allow and facilitate the schooling of their sons and daughters.

Interestingly, however, adolescents take differently *creative advantages* enmeshed in schooling practices that allow them engage in sexual activities outside the censorship of parents and teachers. Some see and are seen, meet and approach (potential) partners at school/tuition; some interact and set up appointments with their sexual partners on the way to and from school/tuition; and many others engage in sexual intercourse, especially on their way from school/tuition during the afternoon or evenings, somewhere in the ghettos, lodges and bushes (for adolescents studying in school located far from the town centre, such as Mitengo), among others.

One of the important facts in these practices is that schooling provides space for adolescents to temporarily escape from parental control and still observe the rhythms of their everyday life by coming home timely. Moreover, delays can be explained and justified through excuses related to the often unquestioned authority of teachers, along with parents' wishes for a better performance by their children at school. Generally speaking, an adolescent performing well in his or her studies commands more confidence from both parents and teachers.

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<sup>141</sup> I am also conscious of parents who for some reasons still do not want their children particularly girls to pursue schooling especially secondary education. See for example, Bangser (2010).





For instance, as reiterated in chapter five, Asia's sister had her sexual encounters somewhere in the bushes on her way from school but would get home at the expected time. In effect, she managed to conceal her sexual practices from the eyes of teachers and parents, until when she was exposed by pregnancy. Likewise, Ashura (see portrait 7.1) regularly met her boyfriend on her way from school in order to set up appointments (since the two had no mobile phones) and receive gifts and cash from her partner. Similarly, when she was schooling, Malkia

used to meet her first boyfriend on her way from school. According to Malkia, the boyfriend knew that her parents were restrictive so he had to position himself properly to meet her as she walked from school. Equally, on the way from school and sometimes at school, Mustafa's friend followed and persuaded (*kupigia debe*) the then potential partner for Mustafa because they were schooling together. According to Mustafa (see portrait 7.4), this was crucial in speeding up her acceptance.

Furthermore, schooling is also a space for some adolescents to mobilize resources that enable them to participate in certain sexual activities. Whereas most parents strive to provide their schooling children with money to cater either for the fare or breakfast, or both, during school days (*siku za shule*), the respective boys and girls would save part or the whole amount in order to entertain a partner(s) in one way or the other. As reiterated in the previous chapter, partners entice each other with cash, airtime, meals, drinks and gifts. The latter include but are not limited to clothes, flowers and cards (see portraits 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7. 4).

In addition, adolescents find it relatively easy to circumvent parental and community restrictions when schooling away from home. The latter involves staying at boarding

schools, day schools with hostels, day schools without hostels, but often students rent rooms close to the school. This was less common for adolescents whose parents were living in Mtwara Town since the ward secondary schools (*shule za kata*) currently enroll the majority of the students within the respective wards.



Plate 8.2: Morning break at a secondary school in Mtwara Town ©2011Sambaiga

As noted earlier on in chapters six and seven, however, there are hundreds of young boys and girls in their teens who migrate to the town from all over the country for schooling purposes. In particular, I am referring to ordinary secondary school graduates who are enrolled at the mushrooming colleges and higher learning institutions in Mtwara Town. For them, being strangers in town, where they believe nobody knows them (*hakuna mtu ananijua huku*), provides a space to explore and practice sexuality in different manners compared to when they go back to their parents. Specifically, many of these adolescents do not have to conceal their sexual activities, except if they have multiple partners. Likewise, both boys and girls can freely cohabit with their partners.

## 8.2 Turning social events into spaces for sexual encounters

Social events such as holidays, parties and festivities constitute important spaces for adolescents' sexual encounters in Mtwara Town. Essentially, these events and activities are meant to mark varied socially and culturally acceptable processes, values and practices, crisscrossing realms of traditions, religious convictions and modernity. Indeed, they provide sites for the intersection of the local and global as well the past, present and future. However, apart from participating in the mentioned social events and activities as per societal prescriptions, adolescents judiciously introduce possibilities for sexual encounters in such moments.

For instance, Eid al-Fitr, marking the end of the Islamic holy month of fasting (Ramadhan), is one of the major holidays in Mtwara Town for both Muslims and non-Muslims. On this day parents allow their children to go out, often in the afternoon after a special meal. It is also commonplace for most boys and girls to come home as late as 8 or 9 pm on this day. Although with slight variations, this is the case even for adolescents from *geti kali*, whose parents are very strict in terms of surveillance.

On the Eid day of 31 August 2011, I was hanging out in different streets of the town. It was clear to me that the streets were calm in the morning before they got busier from the late afternoon (2pm) on, through evening to midnight. Restaurants, bars, food vending points, beaches and clubs were crowded with people of all walks, both young and adults. Boys and girls appeared groomed meticulously, many of them in new dresses. In fact some of the girls I had visited few weeks before the holiday complained that they were not expecting a nice *sikukuu* (holiday) when I wished them a happy Eid because they could not buy a new dress or do their hair in a fashionable style. In addition, they asked me for what they referred to as *sikukuu yangu*, literary meaning "my holiday", but here alluding to a present in cash, especially for the respective holiday. Along with eating and drinking, disco shows and performances took place. A famous musician from Dar es Salaam performed at Makonde Beach Club and there were also disco shows in several other nightclubs in town.

In my conversations with young adults with whom I shared a table at one of the popular bars known as Villa Park, or *mduleni*, while taking dinner (grilled chicken with bananas), I tried to learn more about the Eid. Boldly one of them pointed out that “lodges that charge lower prices for accommodation must be full by now (*gesti za bei poa sasa hivi zitakuwa zimejaa ...*).” Strikingly, the other added, “...in some, you can find young people in a queue (*...zingine utakuta vijana wamepanga foleni...*).” Although it sounds exaggerated, a shared understanding from the conversations was that boys or men strive to have sex with their girlfriend on such a day. This is particularly so when the girl is from a *geti kali* because her movements outside home and school are otherwise very restricted by parents.

From the above conversation, it seemed to me that the holiday opens up a golden opportunity that ought to be capitalized on. Since this was the end of the month, I decided to follow up the matter with my informant during the following month’s visits, among other things. In particular, I asked both girls and boys about their latest sexual intercourse in terms of when and where it had been enacted. Many reported to have had sex on the Eid day, some a day before Eid and others a few days before or after the holiday.<sup>142</sup> Besides Eid, Christmas, Easter and New Year are other popular holidays on which adolescents, regardless of their religious background, snatch the opportunity for sexual encounters. An ethnographic study of adolescent sexuality in the northwestern part of Tanzania reported similar findings as regards holidays (see Wight et al. 2006).

Furthermore, adolescents turn *shughuli* and *sherehe* (parties and festivities) into spaces for premarital sexual practices. These include but are not limited to birthday parties, weddings, graduation and initiation ceremonies such as *kuarua* and *kumtoa mwali*. Whereas initiation ceremonies are often seasonal in order to accommodate with the school schedule, and bearing in mind that the initiates are mainly primary school boys

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<sup>142</sup> To ensure purity during the fasting month, some adolescents, just like adults, maximize sexual encounters before the commencement of the month, a practice known as *kuvunja jungu*, literally meaning breaking the pot, but figuratively referring to parting with, or closing, the chapter before purification. Resuming sexual activities is eagerly awaited by many after the fasting month. Of course, many others would fast during the day and resume sexual encounters at night. Expressions like “just wait for the Ramadhan to go away” are common during the month.

and girls, *shughuli* or (and) *sherehe* such as birthday parties and wedding ceremonies are regular events in town. Graduation ceremonies also follow the rhythm of the respective school or college's calendar. These are also regular, taking into account the multiplicity of educational institutions in Mtwara Town.

Birthday parties and wedding ceremonies are organized either in the neighbourhood at a particular household or at leisure place like a restaurant, bar or club. Especially to birthday parties, adolescents are often invited by their friends; sometimes they are asked to contribute a certain amount (*mchango*). In other situations, as was the case for the birthday party I attended at Ushirika nightclub, girls had a free pass while boys had to pay an entry fee of TZS 2,000 (1.3 USD) each. A girl who was among my informants and who lived with her father had organized a birthday party with support from her boyfriend, but without the knowledge of her single parent. My field-assistant along with other friends were invited. Many parents grant permission to the adolescents to attend these parties, in line with the value attached to friendships. I return to the details on friendship in the context of sexuality in the next section.

Although adolescents are less often invited to wedding ceremonies, they still participate in one way or the other, especially if it takes place in the neighbourhood. Since most of these ceremonies, just like birthday and graduation parties, involve a disco show, most adolescents report having been made aware of the wedding ceremonies by the loudness of the music. Several boys like Mustafa (see portrait 7.4) claimed to have seen their girlfriends for the first time at a wedding event in the neighbourhood.

Graduation ceremonies, particularly those which directly involve adolescents in the sense that they are the ones graduating, give strong justification for parents to allow the respective boys and girls to celebrate with their peers. Apparently, parents would participate in the official ceremonies at school, but not at the party which often follows later on the same day, or some days later. At the graduation party I attended, again at Ushirika nightclub on 29 October 2011, which involved form four leavers from Rahaleo Secondary School, the club was almost sold out. Both boys and girls appeared in their trendy costumes tailored for "nightclubbing". Along with dancing, alone or in pairs, some



were drinking alcohol, others soft drinks, and many were busy in conversations among and between boys and girls. Indeed, many adolescents use such occasions to interact with their partners or find new partners, some come closer and others may even have sex somewhere on their way home.



Plate 8.3: Young people at Ushirika nightclub

©2011 Sambaiga

As for the initiation ceremonies, *jando* and *unyago* are still common in Mtwara Town, but have been transformed into new forms, different to the traditional events. Although some parents can still afford to transfer their sons and daughters between the age of six and twelve to their home villages in order to participate in what is considered a real initiation (see Halley 2012 for details of the practices in Mtwara rural), most parents organize initiation rituals and subsequent ceremonies at their homes.

Thus, *kuwarua* (to initiate) is an important activity, particularly for mothers, whereby a child is brought or initiated into adolescence, marking *jando* and *unyago* for boys and girls, respectively. For boys, it entails being circumcised, but at the hospital rather than in the forest as is the case in the rural areas. In some cases boys are circumcised a few

weeks after birth. For girls it involves being secluded for about one or two weeks, rather than almost a month in the past or currently in Mtwara rural. In both cases, the event includes teachings, mainly in the form of songs emphasizing good manners and respect to parents. In some cases they comprise marital messages including sexual practices and how to handle husbands/wives.<sup>143</sup>

To conclude the initiation ritual, a ceremony (*shughuli/sherehe*) is conducted, to which friends of the initiates are invited along with the parents' peers, especially from the mother's side. Traditional dance (*ngoma*) or (and) disco shows are usually part and parcel of the celebration. Apparently this is the most important part for the respective parents because it is their turn to garner gifts and respect from others. As noted earlier in chapter seven, female parents participate in similar activities as members of the networks of which they are part. So for them the initiation ritual serves social, economic and symbolic ends. Of interest to the adolescents, however, is the opportunity to be invited, to justify spending time away and delay coming home. The moments can be exploited for sexual encounters.

Important to note are the efforts by the state to control and regulate adolescents' participation in social and cultural practices. Conversations with the Mtwara Municipal Cultural Officer confirmed that there are rules regulating cultural activities such as discos, cinema and video shows as well as initiation ceremonies. The enforcement of such rules, however, is quite challenging. For instance, music and disco shows ought to be finished by 11.30 pm on a Sunday, and 2.00 am on Fridays, Saturdays and public holidays. Children under eighteen years are not allowed in music and disco halls or clubs where alcohol is served. In practice, disco shows start at 11.00 am and go on to 4:00 or 5.00 am. Moreover, adolescents under eighteen constitute the majority in the halls/clubs.

Finally, but equally revealing, empirical evidence comes from a fatal accident that occurred on Saturday 15 January 2011 at 4 am. It involved a car with six young people,

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<sup>143</sup> The diversity of messages in the teachings challenges the dominant discourses against the initiation rituals as hotspots for teenage pregnancy and HIV infections (see also Bangser 2010, Halley 2012).

three males and three females who were coming from Msijute Disco Club. Two people died on the spot. According to informants, the two killed were sexual partners. The male was a student at the Stella Maris Mtwara University College, while the female was an adolescent who had just completed ordinary secondary education (form four) the previous year. The other four sustained serious injuries. It was striking to learn that one of the victims was a sixteen-year-old secondary school girl. From conversations with different people, including the head teacher at a secondary school in the town, it became evident that it is not proper for students in primary and secondary schools to spend a night away from home. However, the accident revealed that both male and female adolescents in Mtwara Town are capable of spending a night out. Conversations with different boys and girls further showed that some of the adolescents directly or indirectly ask for permission from their parents or guardian before going out, but many others furtively escape.

### **8.3 Friendships as (social) spaces**

From an anthropological standpoint, friendship entails forms of relatedness manifested in a variety of relationships in different contexts. This conception is critical in the sense that it allows for an examination of how friendship is “articulated with ideas of being related and ideas of being a person” (Desai and Killick 2010: 15, cf. Giddens 1992). Froerer (2010: 133) maintains that despite being one of “the fundamental ways in which people form connections,” friendship remains “peripheral to the broader anthropological project” mainly due to “anthropology’s traditional preoccupation with kinship” (cf. Bell and Coleman 1999, Killick and Desai 2010). Drawing on a phenomenological vision of intersubjectivity, Evans (2010) challenges tendencies to stereotype young people’s friendships and underlines the need to understand the value of friendship in subject formations. It is within this framework in relation to the overlapping sexual subjectivity discussed in chapter five, that I situate the analysis of friendships as spaces for sexual encounters. This is also in response to the endemic tendencies in studies of sexual and reproductive health of adolescents to reduce friendships to “peer pressure”, hence paying limited attention to their inherent complexity.



Friendships<sup>144</sup> between and among boys and girls add up to (social) spaces for adolescent sexual practices. As forms of social relationships, friendships can be transformed into sites for exchanging, sharing, testing ideas, styles, desires and aspirations as regards sexual values, norms, mores/scripts and practices. Basically, friendship is one of the valued forms of social relationships in Mtwara Town, and adolescents are not prohibited from having friends. But this in no way means that parents or guardians approve of all types of friends. Quite often, parents disapprove of friends with “bad manners” (*tabia mbaya*) such as smoking marijuana (*bangi/kivuto*), running around with men or women (*umalaya/uhuni*), displaying unacceptable dress (*kivazi kibovu*) and styles, and theft (*wizi*) among others.

Whereas many adolescents pay attention to such objections as discursively reflected in expressions such as, “my friends are just as dutiful as myself (*rafiki zangu wametulia kama mimi tu*)” many others are more in favour of the peers’ perspectives than the parents. In relation to the latter are remarks such as, “I am smart and I don’t get along with people who are kind of ignorant (*mi mjanja sitaki urafiki na mjingamjiga*).” Another notable expression comes from a teenage girl who considers herself to be less restricted by parents, as she notes, “I know who to make friends with but I don’t entertain girls from *geti kali* because if anything goes wrong, her parents can hold you accountable (...*sipendi marafiki wa geti kali maana likitokea lolote wazazi wake watakuuliza*).”

On the other hand, there are adolescents who do not care about the character of a friend on the grounds that the friend’s “bad manner” is not easily transferred to their own. Another teenage girl comments, “bad manners are not contagious, I can befriend with anyone (*tabia mbaya mtu haambukizwi...yeyote anaweza kuwa rafiki yangu*).”

Nevertheless, as I show in what follows, when it comes to sexual practices, friendships are pivotal for connecting (potential) partners, concealing or covering up sexual activities

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<sup>144</sup> I follow a critical anthropological understanding of friendship advanced by Desai and Killick (2010) in their seminal edited volume *The Ways of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*.

or (and) partnership(s), and exploring pertinent issues in adolescent sexuality and reproduction.

I start with friendships as spaces for encounters between (potential) partners. As previously depicted in the accounts of the various processes of establishing sexual partnership(s), friends can be crucial “connectors” between potential or current partners. Portraying the collective character of some of the sexual practices, connection in this context can take on different shapes, ranging from bringing together potential partners (*kukutanisha*), helping in persuasion (*kupigia debe/pande*) to “a go-between” function (*kuunganisha*). Mustafa (portrait 7.4) and Anna (portrait 6.10) best illustrate how friendship can provide space for connecting (potential) partners. Offering a rather different dimension, Habiba (portrait 7.2) has forged sexual partnerships with a friend of her own brother and friends of her ex-partners. Above all, one of Habiba’s partners cheated on her with her own best friend.

Furthermore, friendship constitutes one of the mechanisms for concealing or covering up sexual activities or/and partnership(s) among adolescents. This is important in the efforts to circumvent parental and other restrictions. Specifically, visiting friends is used as an excuse to be away or delay coming home. This is backed up by the fact that friends habitually visit each other’s home, hence they are known to parents on both sides, in most cases (see also Fuglesang 1994). This was also evident during my visits where both boys and girls interacted with friends, peers, and neighbours at home. While girls spend leisure time visiting friends in the neighbourhood or beyond, exchanging accounts commonly referred to as “hitting the story” (*kupiga stori*), mainly on the veranda, often facing the road or path boys did the same at *maskini*, usually away from home.

Strikingly, even an illness episode reported by a friend can open a rare space for an adolescent to spend hours, a night, or even a few days away from home. For instance, Asia capitalized on her friend’s illness to justify a visit, and then manipulated the opportunity to spend a night with her boyfriend. Asia is a nineteen-year-old teenage mother and has primary education. She is a Muslim but has not gone to the mosque since

she got pregnant. However, she fasts during Ramadhan and she knows that her religion does not allow her to engage in sexual activities before or outside marriage. She lives with her two parents in Mikindani. Asia considers her father to be very strict – *mkali*. Even after pregnancy she still feels the control of her parents in her daily life. In the course of our visits, Asia and my field assistant (Fatma) became friends so that the former would even pay visits to the latter, with permission from the parents. On her daughter's birthday, Asia invited Fatma and me to her home (and insisted that we bring gifts for her daughter). When we arrived around noon, we met Asia and her father. In the course of exchanging greetings the father asked Fatma about her health as follows,

Father: How are you feeling now? (...) your friend told us about the illness

Fatma: I am very well thanks (...)

Father: Yeah (...) your fellow (*mwenzako*) asked if she could come and help (...) and we are happy that you are doing well now, eeh

Fatma (though a little puzzled): Thank you so much father (...) it was helpful and I have improved

Asia (while smiling): most welcome (...) be seated now, sister Fatma (*siukae sasa dada Fatma*).

In actual fact, Fatma had informed Asia three days before that she had malaria when they talked on phone. Consequently, Asia asked for permission from her parents to visit Fatma and spend the night with her because she was sick. However, when she was granted permission Asia decided to spend the night with her boyfriend. As noted earlier in my reflections on fieldwork in chapter four, for some reasons, Asia did not inform Fatma about her decision. Later on when we asked Asia why she had not alerted Fatma. She simply laughed but appreciated that Fatma had covered up for her. In addition, following the weaning of her daughter coupled with the departure of her boyfriend for Dar es Salaam, Asia regularly asked for permission from her parents to visit Fatma in the Town centre. While she occasionally took the opportunity to go to a nightclub with Fatma, she sometimes would spend the night with a (casual) partner.<sup>145</sup>

Likewise, adolescents in multiple sexual partnerships can bank on friendships to avoid or (and) deal with the risk of *kugonganisha* (collision of partners). For instance, when Zamda, one of Sharobaro's girlfriends (see portrait 6.3) suspected him of cheating, he

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<sup>145</sup> Following the migration of her partner to Dar es Salaam *kutafuta maisha* (searching for life), Asia has renewed one of her old sexual relations and established new sexual partnerships.

denounced the allegation by saying that the other girl was his friend's partner (*demu wa rafiki yangu*). Similarly, to avoid being suspected or seen by other partners, David (portrait 6.1) and Mustafa (portrait 7.4) would interact with the respective partners through friends and meet the partners at a friend's room or ghetto. The latter are indeed among the important places where adolescents meet for sexual intercourse as portrayed in chapters seven and eight.

Moreover, friendships provide adolescents with spaces to explore and seek interventions as regards pertinent issues arising in their sexual and reproductive lives. This takes into account the fact that most adolescents in Mtwara Town, and elsewhere in Tanzania, are situated in a cultural context where free and explicit discussions of sexual matters with parents, teachers and other adults are largely unacceptable (see Fuglesang 1994, Obrist van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997, Whight et al. 2006, Plummer et al. 2007). As sexual beings, adolescents coming of age in such settings find it comfortable and practical to exchange views and share experiences with friends and peers. After all, sexuality constitutes one of the prominent topics in the daily conversations of most teenagers (see also Nnko and Pool 1997).<sup>146</sup> So far, little is known about the importance of these encounters for the respective adolescents, apart from the dominant reductionist views held by parents and experts which pigeonhole such sensible (at least from the perspectives of most teenagers) lived experiences as mere peer pressures and risk factors.

Inasmuch as it is vital to approach peer relationships with a focus on how they predispose adolescent sexual and reproductive health risks, it is equally crucial to acknowledge and understand these relationships from the adolescents' viewpoints. The two approaches, I argue, complement each other, especially when (social) well-being is given due weight in the conceptualization of adolescents' sexual and reproductive health.

In the present study, an attempt to scrutinize adolescents' encounters with friends shows that the latter not only enable teenagers to explore various dimensions of sexuality but

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<sup>146</sup> I am conscious of other popular topic among adolescents, such as style or fashion, football, movies, music and politics (especially on the part of boys).

also learn and gain skills and ways of avoiding or (and) handling what they conceive as risks. Generally speaking, adolescents can share and explore a wide-range of issues with friends. Specifically, these include but are not limited to sexual skills and competences, ways of handling tensions arising in sexual partnerships, how to deal with pregnancy, rejection, cheating and multiple partnerships; and how to conceal sexual activities and relationships from parents, including what to do when parents get to know. A few examples of lived experiences from Mtwara Town serve to illustrate the point at issue.

Just to reiterate, during her sexual debut, Ashura, who was then living with her grandmother (see portrait 7.1), was worried about the pain in her body as well as the bleeding. To clear her worries, she turned to her friend. Also, when she was pondering about breaking up with her partner whom she had cohabited with for two years, Ashura consulted her best friend who endorsed the idea, based on the deteriorating living conditions following her visit to Ashura's home. Ultimately Ashura broke up in order to "start a new life (*kuanza maisha upya*)".

Likewise, Zamda, Sharobaro's girlfriend (see portrait 6.3), sought advice from her best friend on how to retain Sharobaro when she confirmed that he was cheating on her with Asha. In the first place, Zamda agreed with the friend to summon Sharobaro, the same day after I had mediated between Sharobaro, Zamda and Asha. This was the case after Zamda had told me that she would surrender her commitment to Sharobaro to allow him to proceed with Asha. Perhaps Zamda gave it a second thought because Asha had also declared that she was not going to continue with the relationship. As recounted to me by Sharobaro, it was Zamda's friend who called him that evening and reported that Zamda had been involved in a motorbike accident (*ajali ya pikipiki*). At that point Sharobaro was concerned and went to see Zamda and her friend. It seems that Zamda was fine but the two needed the opportunity to not only blame (*kumsuta*) Sharobaro for betraying (*kusaliti*) his partnership with Zamda, but also plead with him to reconsider his decision. As noted earlier in the portrait, Zamda and her friend mobilized resources to buy a mobile phone for Sharobaro in an effort to win him back.

Equally, Mustafa (see portrait 7.4) boasts that he is now more competent when it comes to approaching potential partners and gaining their commitment. He attributes this to what he calls “the privilege of being in company with experienced fellows (*bahati ya kuwa na washikaji ambao ni wazoefu*).” From them Mustafa acquired *mistari* (phrases), and *maufundi* (skills). The latter can be shared in conversation at *maskani* but also through watching pornography at a friend’s house or on a mobile phone. Romantic phrases (*mistari*) and pornographic materials can also be accessed individually through different media, a point to which I come back with more empirical detail in the next section.

In the same manner, Asha, Sharobaro’s recent partner (see portrait 6.3), confirmed that she had once accompanied her best friend to a health facility in order to perform an induced abortion. Asha still recalls the degree of pain that her friend had to sustain, to the point of losing her voice. Perhaps, her reflection on the experience of her friend especially the fact that she (the friend) managed to abort in the end despite the pain, allowed Asha to imagine the procedure (abortion) and possibility to withstand it. But as noted earlier in chapter seven, Asha’s number one concern was to abort in order to maintain her sexual reputation in the eyes of her parents who had promised her the chance of further education.

On her part Leila, a teenage mother of three children (see portrait 6.5), strived to have an intentional abortion during her third pregnancy. She had to consult her friends to learn several methods of induced abortion, as described in chapter seven. Even though in the end the methods did not work out for her, the peers explained that was because she had delayed the intervention for too long (she was in the ninth week of her pregnancy). On the other hand, David (portrait 6.1) had to mobilize resources from friends to facilitate the abortion of one of his girlfriends. The sum amounting to TZS 45,000 (30 USD) was raised from among his friends (*kupitisha mchango kwa washikaji*). But he later realized that the girlfriend was not pregnant but just had wanted to tease him and find out whether he really cared for her.

Also, Asia, an adolescent mother, considered her best friend along with her sister and her boyfriend to be important key informants with regard to sexual matters prior to the pregnancy. Inter-subjectively assessing which issues were to be shared with *the others*, Asia recounts, “when I knew that I was pregnant, I first informed my friend who suggested to me that I should terminate the pregnancy (*nilimwambia rafiki yangu akanishauri nitoe*) but I then decided to tell my partner who fortunately accepted the responsibility (*...bahati nzuri akakubali*).” Despite the assurance by her boyfriend, Asia was not certain, so she decided to appeal to the parents for a back-up. At this point, the challenge for Asia was to disclose the pregnancy to her parents. This is when it was necessary to consult her sister, as she remarks, “I told my sister because I certainly knew that she would inform my mother (*mimi nilimwambia dada...nikimwambia yeye najua atakuja kwa mama*).” Important to not here, Asia considered her sister as a friend apart from being siblings. This corroborates Desai and Killick (2010) who have convincingly argued that friendship is not confined to non-kin.

The last example comes from Mfaume, an adolescent boy with a vast experience in sexual matters and who has had one partner at a time. He recounted to me that when the mother of his recent partner realized that he was dating her daughter, she did not just warn him but also cautioned that if anything happened to her daughter (mainly pointing to pregnancy), he would be held responsible. To sort out how best to deal with the situation, Mfaume consulted a friend whom he refers to as *mzoefu* (experienced). The latter advised him to continue with the partnership as long as he loved the girl but to make sure that he concealed the sexual encounters.

#### **8.4 Appropriating multiple sexual scripts through (social) mass media**

Empirical evidence from Mtwara Town shows that media of all kinds not only provide adolescents with (social) spaces for sexual practices, but also enable most boys and girls to explore sexual scripts, fashions and styles beyond the adolescents’ locality. Actually, the past three decades have witnessed tremendous scholarly attention on various dimensions of mass media in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa (see Fuglesang 1994,

Swilla 2000, Rweyemamu 2007).<sup>147</sup> Similarly, interests in mass media are also obvious in moral discourses as voiced by parents, religious teachings and sometimes echoed in legal and policy guidelines and discussions related to child and youth development (see Wamoyi et al. 2011b). The intensity, however, is evidently high in the field of sexuality among young people. Especially when it comes to adolescent sexual and reproductive health, exposure to media has been seen as a mixed blessing.

The first and almost dominant view is that access to uncensored media predisposes adolescents to “risk behaviour” and immoral practices (see for example, Rweyemamu 2007, Sekiwunga and Whyte 2009). Likewise, there are also others who see mass media as confusing or sexualizing<sup>148</sup> adolescents when it comes to premarital sexual scripts (Dilger 2003, Rwebangira and Liljeström 1998). Grounded in “a moral panic” and discontinuity discourses, the view assumes that adolescents are mere victims of whatever “immoral” materials and images they are exposed to through the media, thereby ignoring their agency (Johannessen 2006: 167, see also Bucholtz 2002, Cole 2010).

The second perspective considers media as a window to reach young people with health messages and education (see, for example, Basteien 2009). Following a rather comprehensive anthropological approach to the study of media, I look at mass media as contested social and cultural fields (see Fuglesang 1994, Kottack 2009, de Bruijn et al. 2009), and that adolescents are not mere victims but creatively appropriate (sexual) images and opportunities inherent in the respective media (Bucholtz 2002, Christiansen et al. 2006). This way of approaching adolescents in relation to media, I claim, allows for a compelling analysis of how boys and girls actively engage with media, rather than simply how the latter influence the former.

In Mtwara Town, access to mass media is not limited to the ownership of a TV, radio and mobile phone because adolescents exploit a wide-range of relationships in order to access

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<sup>147</sup> Published a decade ago, Spitulnik’s (1993) *Anthropology and Mass Media* still offers a superb overview of the increased interest of anthropologists in the study of mass media.

<sup>148</sup> Moore and Rosental (2006) maintain that media such as magazines and movies tell adolescents that sex is interesting and desirable.



a respective media. In particular, friends, neighbours, partners and relatives are among other possible sources for those who do not own a particular media gadget. Others make use of video shows at clubs in the neighbourhoods. However, it is important to note that almost all adolescents wish or aspire to have the mentioned gadgets at their disposal or even own them. A few examples are required to illustrate this point.

Leila (portrait 6.5) watched TV at a friend's or neighbour's place. Amanda, a secondary school girl and neighbour to my field assistant (Fatma) did not have a mobile phone in the first six months after I got to know her. She regularly communicated with her boyfriend through Fatma's mobile phone (at times I happened to be around at Fatma's place, at times she would accompany Fatma during our field visits, not least, of course, she enjoyed being out-of-doors. However, she later bought her own mobile phone. Likewise, when I paid the first salary to my field assistant (Fatma), a TV set and CD player were among the things that she bought first. Of course, her friends and some of the girls with whom we sometimes agreed to meet for conversations at Fatma's home also admired her new gadgets. Actually, when I asked about their aspirations in life, some would say that they wished to be like Fatma.

Basically, possession of such "items of modernity" is increasingly becoming important in the efforts people make to forge positive representations as "modern and progressive". In the words of Minu Fuglesang, "the modern gadgets have significant symbolic value essential in participating in modernity and forging a sense of being modern (*wa kisasa*)" (Fuglesang 1994: 80).

As noted in the previous discussion of the changing urban settings of Mtwara Town (see chapter five), growing business and trading activities facilitate the availability of the "items of modernity". Just to reiterate, shops selling cheap electronic products including mobile phones, TV sets, CD and DVD players imported from China have made it possible for many adolescents to afford some of these items, especially what has come to be known as Chinese mobile phones (*simu ya mchina*). Notably, some of the phones have an in-built radio, camera or (and) TV, or can connect to Internet, or both. In this sense,

one can access a range of mass media just through one's mobile phone. In the following few paragraphs I show how adolescents transform social or mass media into social and cultural spaces as regards sexual practices.

### ***Media as space for sexual encounters***

Media can be transformed into spaces for adolescents to interact, establish, and consolidate sexual relationships without having to necessarily compromise parental restrictions and other structural boundaries. For instance, a mobile phone enables adolescents to interact with potential and real sexual partners, even at home. Through phone calls and text messages (sms), dates are initiated and negotiated, appointments are made, feelings, emotions and affection can be expressed via sexual images and imageries in the form of romantic sms or conversations, or both.

Increasingly since 2008, following the launching of mobile phones based money transfer, care and commitment can be articulated through giving and receiving airtime and money via mobile phones as noted earlier. Pioneered by the Vodacom Tanzania Limited mobile company with its M-Pesa, today almost all the major mobile phone communication companies have introduced the service. At times, mobile phone communication is done along with watching love movies/films/series/music or listening to a radio programme on love affairs (see for example, Kaziga portrait 6.2 in chapter six of this dissertation).

In this sense, mobile phone communications allow adolescents to transcend spatial, social and cultural limits, at least temporarily. Being able to maintain privacy or secrecy through hiding even in the presence of *others* (introducing temporary privacy in the public) enables adolescents to command social respectability and worth from the perspectives of both parents and peers. Although there are rare situations where parents/guardians or teachers happen to uncover such a secrecy as highlighted earlier in the case of Mfaume and Mwajabu (see chapter five), most adolescents succeed in hiding their sexual relationships or activities, or both.

As depicted in several portraits in the previous chapters, it can be maintained that mobile phone communications have transformed courtship practices among adolescents from the reliance of physical encounters and love letters (*barua za mapenzi*) to exchanging contacts and subsequently following up with calls and text messages. From the perspective of most boys, it is easy to approach (*kutongoza*) a girl who has a mobile phone as long as you manage to get her number. Other boys feel that with a mobile phone one does not need to explicitly approach a girl. This is reflected in the common expression that “we do not really approach these days but simply get the girl’s number (*siku hizi hatutongozi ila tunatafuta namba ya demu*).”

In essence, this does not mean that girls easily accept boys’/men’s proposals through mobile phone as revealed in the previous analysis of the intricacies of approaching (*kutongoza*) and being approached (*kutongozwa*). The point expressed here is two fold, on the one hand, boys hint at the wider space (frequent and insistent follow up is made relatively easy) and the means opened up by the mobile phone to articulate ones interest and appeal to the expectations of the girls. On the other hand, it is easy to navigate or circumvent parental and other institutional constraints.

The above corroborates findings from a study on mobile communication and new social spaces in Africa, with a focus on Khartoum in Sudan, by de Bruijn et al. (2009). Specifically, the authors elaborate that the mobile phone creates a space for the communication between sexes, which are conventionally confined in “separate spheres” by Muslim society. In concrete terms, “women can call from their houses and meet their male friends without others knowing about it” (de Bruijn et al. 2009: 19). Accordingly, the study concludes that mobile phones enable women to attain a certain degree of “autonomy while still taking the societal norms seriously” ( de Bruijn et al. 2009: 19).

### ***Reaching out to multiple sexual scripts, knowledge skills and competences in media***

Increasingly, mass media provide spaces for adolescents to explore a wide range of sexual and reproductive scripts, knowledge, skills and competences in Mtwara Town. A critical point, however, is that adolescents creatively select and pay more attention to

some elements compared to others. Put differently, adolescents are not attentive to or attracted by everything the mass media have to offer. Nevertheless, there are both similar and dissimilar aspects of interest with regard to young people and adults alike. Quite often, the media target specific individuals and groups with their discourses but can be heard or (and) be seen indiscriminately. Yet still, various actors differently make sense of the images, imageries and social imaginaries from the media.<sup>149</sup> As regards adolescent premarital sexuality, the media present both “sexualizing” and “desexualizing” discourses and practices.

For example, the analysis of quantitative data from 500 girls in Mtwara Town, as part of this study, hinted that the media, especially youth magazines, radio and television were among the major sources of information on how to deal with teenage pregnancy. Further analysis, including logistic regression also confirmed that access to media, significantly contributes to the resilience<sup>150</sup> of teenagers against pregnancy. Among other things, what this means in terms of causality is that providing sexual and reproductive education through media would reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy. However, ethnographic enquiry of what happens when adolescents engage with information from the media in everyday life unearthed the complexities overlooked by the regression analysis.

In line with the quantitative data, ethnographic analysis confirms that most adolescents, have heard, seen and (or) read the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) advertisements or campaigns against teenage pregnancy and STIs in various media. Notably, the majority admitted that they get entertained when watching, reading or listening to the mentioned health promotion materials and images (*yanafurahisha*). A possible explanation can be drawn from the fact that most of advertisements and campaigns follow the popular “edutainment” approach to “behaviour change”,<sup>151</sup> which in this regard successfully

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<sup>149</sup> On the conceptual linkages between imagination (as an intentional act) and the image see (Casey 1971). See also Sartre’s (2012) *The Imagination* on the differences between images, imaginary and imaginaries.

<sup>150</sup> Resilience in this context refers to the capacity of the actor to proactively and reactively deal with specific threat(s). For a recent extension of (social) resilience studies in the social sciences see Obrist et al. 2010.

<sup>151</sup> Ingrained in the health belief model “edutainment” or educational entertainment is one the popular behaviour change models in public health which presuppose a trade off between learning and enjoying. In his quintessential anthropological reflections on behaviour change models, Yoder (1997) maintains that the

grabs the attention of young people. This can be summed up in phrases such as “I very much like listening to them (*napenda sana kuyasikiliza*)” and, “I am closely following them (*ninayafuatilia sana*).”

Nevertheless, a closer examination of how individual adolescents actually engage with or respond to the aforesaid information or messages goes beyond the quantitative finding. I decided to further enquire into the question in conversations with adolescents during the fifth visit. By this time, I already had gained a rich understanding of several dimensions of their sexual and reproductive lives, along with a great deal of affinity. As such, it was easy to inter-subjectively tease out the discrepancies between ideals and realities. At least four different ways of responding to sexual and reproductive health messages can be discerned from the analysis of ethnographic materials as summarized below:

The first and most common response entails a sort of giving oneself time to make sense of the messages/images in relation to one’s practical judgment of his or her situation. Here I am referring to adolescents who said that despite temporarily paying attention to the sexual and reproductive messages from media and other sources, they had not yet started translating them (the messages) into action towards the intended outcome. This was echoed in the phrase; “I have not started working on them (*sijaanza kuyafanyia kazi*)”. For instance, Somoe claims that she has heard of SRH messages from media but she has not yet started taking steps (*naona mazuri nayasikiliza na nakubaliana nayo. Ila kuyafuatilia bado sijaanza kuyafuatilia*).

The discrepancy was not only articulated discursively but also reflected in the sexual practices of the respective adolescents as portrayed in various cases. Indeed, the finding adds to the research evidence that remains unpopular among many colleagues in public health and development, practitioners who have difficulty to comprehend the mismatch

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latter are informed by three theories of behaviour change. First is the Health Belief Model which focuses on the individual perception of costs and benefits of his or her actions in relation to health problems. Second is the theory of Reasoned Action which stress on volition of an individual and assumes that the latter acts rationally in evaluating information. Lastly is the famous Social Learning Theory and it emphasizes on modelling (observing and imitating behaviours) and reinforcement (134-135).

between high levels of knowledge about a particular health problem and engagement in so-called risk behaviour (see also Vance 1991, Parker 2001, Price and Hawkins 2002, Taylor 2007). Nonetheless, the finding suggests that acting on the information one is exposed or exposing him or herself to, is a process, and indeed, a complex one. As such, mere access to SRH information does not guarantee prescribed actions (behaviour change) on the part of the actor.

The second way of responding to SRH messages involves selectivity in terms of what aspects attract one's attention and how they fit into the respective adolescent's ideals and realities. This is revealed in the contentions made by some adolescents that, "I comply with some but not with other SRH messages (*baadhi ninazingatia na mengine sizingatii*)." Apparently, these adolescents acknowledge that the SRH messages both converge with and diverge from the multiple aspirations, expectations and experiences that constitute their daily lives. Consequently, such adolescents practically assess and judge the SRH messages in relation to their own conceptions of SRH risks.

For instance, Anna (portrait 6.10) has seen and read about the messages from various sources, including media. Indeed, she considers herself a fan of the advertisements (*mpenzi wa matangazo*) and agrees with the messages (*nayakubali*) but she only follows some aspects, and neglects others (*nazingatia baadhi mengine sizingatii*). Likewise, Malkia and Mwajabu studied at Rahaleo Secondary School where they were trained as peer educators under the PASHA project.<sup>152</sup> The project aimed at enabling adolescents at school to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Although

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<sup>152</sup> PASHA stands for Prevention and Awareness in Schools against HIV and AIDS. It started with the aim of educating students on how to prevent HIV/AIDS and early pregnancy in primary and secondary schools in the Mtwara region. It began in primary schools in Mtwara in 2006 and was later introduced in secondary schools. The project was part of the Reproductive Health Component of the Tanzanian German Programme to Support Health. It was implemented with technical support by the Swiss Centre for International Health (SCIH) of the then Swiss Tropical Institute (STI). For details see, [http://www.swisstph.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Pdfs/SCIH/scih\\_pasha flyer07.pdf](http://www.swisstph.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Pdfs/SCIH/scih_pasha flyer07.pdf).

Malkia and Mwajabu did not opt for abstinence, they used condoms, obtaining them from school since one of their roles as peer educators was to distribute condoms to their peers.

On her part, Asia thought about using contraceptives before she got pregnant. However, she was also concerned about the possibility of threatening her position of social respectability in the eyes of her parents. This, according to Asia, was due to her understanding of the lack of privacy at the family planning unit, along with the local imaginary that contraceptives were meant for women (*kwa ajili ya wanawake*), not girls (*sio wasichana*). Thus, she knew for sure that the moment she was seen entering the family planning unit, the news would have reached her parents even before she got home. This would mean revealing her sexual activities that she strived to hide, at least from the sight of her restrictive parents. For her that was more powerful than any SRH message. Alternatively, Asia would have to travel to a distant health facility in town which she did not choose to do.

In view of the above, I contend that concerns about social well-being loom large when young people engage with what they conceive to be a problematic sexual and reproductive health issue which is why, for example, most adolescents are more concerned with avoiding pregnancy than protection against HIV infections. In this sense, however, I reiterate that it is not the experts' conception of pregnancy as a risk that bothers many adolescents, rather the immediate consequences that pregnancy has on the young people's (sexual) reputation, social respectability and worth. This also explains the increasing incidences of induced or intentional abortion, along with declining rates of teenage pregnancy, not just in Mtwara region but elsewhere in Tanzania, too (see Bangser 2010, Plummer et al. 2008)<sup>153</sup>.

Equally, despite being a young mother, Asia neither considers herself different from her peers nor she feel that she belongs to the category of women and mothers. Accordingly, following the weaning of her child, and coupled with the departure of her partner for Dar

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<sup>153</sup> It should also be noted that when it cannot be avoided, pregnancy does not entirely shatter the adolescents' chance of regaining social respect and worth. As shown in the case of Leila (portrait 6.5), the arrival of her baby opened up the opportunity for her to cohabit with the child's father at his parents' home.

es Salaam, Asia secretly entered into multiple sexual partnerships to satisfy her sexual pleasure and command more resources to implement her vision of beauty and to look cute. When looking cute, she has attracted many casual partners from whom she draws money, thus consolidating the work on her looks and child rearing. After the six visits, I then visited her at home a year later. Aisha had changed dramatically. Of course she gained some weight, she was no longer breast-feeding, and she had improved on her use of make-up and cosmetics. In short, she looked “cute” and neighbours were commending that *amekuwa mwali*, meaning she had regained pubescence, the state that she had been before getting pregnant (for similar findings, see Johnson-Hanks 2006).

Thus, adolescents can select some aspects and reject others from the SRH messages they comes across in the media. More precisely, an individual adolescent has no problem in complying with the dimension of an SRH message that does not contradict his or her own conception of what constitute a SRH risk. This points to critical questions as to what makes a particular adolescent’s sexual or reproductive practice risky, how risky, and how to go about it? <sup>154</sup> Grounding SRH practices on the lived experiences and emic perspectives of the adolescents is crucial in generating nuanced explanations in response to the above questions, as illuminated in different cases of the presented study.

The third form of adolescents’ engagement with SRH messages is to simply ignore them and not comply with any aspect of the messages. As noted earlier, adolescents can ignore the discourses or images portrayed in the SRH messages because these are not in harmony with their imaginations and concrete situations, or because they make no sense at all. This is reflected in expressions like, “I simply don’t follow them (*siyazingatii tu*)” or “in my situation is it impossible to follow them...I am used to this life (*kwa maisha yangu inakuwa vigumu kuzingatia...nimeshazoea*).” The lived experiences also illustrate the said incompatibilities. Leila (portrait 6.5) and Amina (portrait 6.8) are good examples.

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<sup>154</sup> The questions hint at the controversy surrounding risk studies within and beyond the field of health. For anthropological discussion on the subject, see, for example, Douglas and Wildavsky (1982), Douglas and Calvez (1990), Douglas (2003), Caplan 2000.



Individual and collective, instantaneous and experiential desires and aspirations may also prove to be stronger than the risks defined by experts. For instance, Mustafa (portrait 7.4) does not like to use a condom because of the disenchanting experiences he has had when using them; instead, he opts for withdrawal to avoid pregnancy. Likewise, Asha, one of Sharobaro's partners (see portrait 6.3), opposed the use of condom in her search for sexual pleasure. When she got pregnant she decided to abort in order to avoid disappointing her parents who had promised to secure her an opportunity to pursue college education.

The fourth response to SRH messages is to comply with the latter as best as possible, at least temporarily. Though not many adolescents fall completely into this category, a few have tried their best, with different motivations. Certainly this features in the comprehension of young people in moments when confronted by the messages. As voiced by several of my informants, one may feel convinced by the SRH messages, at least for a while, but then decides to ignore them (*unaweza kusema unafuata matangazo lakini baadae unaghairi*). However, there are some adolescents who strive to abide by the messages but they are not necessarily motivated by the experts' conceptions of risk. Among them is Hussein, a boy who had a girlfriend but never engaged in sexual intercourse for the entire three-year span of the relationship; and Mawazo, a secondary school girl who is in her third partnership without having sex. The two, however, have had to face the reality of being cheated on by the partners.

Finally, there are but a few adolescents who have heard/read/seen SRH messages or images, but not understood them. Although this may be easily judged in terms of level of education/literacy, as conventional discourses tend to reduce it to, there is more to it beyond the linear linkage between knowledge and practice. Particularly, I posit that this form of engaging with SRH messages is more about *sense making* as individual adolescents may not make sense of the respective images or discourses, among other things, if the latter do not draw their attention to, and (or) are not in line with, their world views, perspectives and concrete realities. For instance, Ashura was in her final year of primary school when she got pregnant (see portrait 6.4 and 7.1). For her the attraction of

gifts and the anticipation of relief from her harsh living conditions were the things that mattered at the moment, certainly more rather than the SRH messages. More precisely, she entered into the relationship with the prospect of attaining relief from her poor livelihood conditions. At that point, Ashura did not think about pregnancy. Above all, she had heard about SRH messages at school, but never understood them (*nilikuwa nayasikia lakini sikuyaelewa*).

Apart from the above SRH messages, adolescents come across myriad of sexual scripts in the media. Whether in the form of discourses, images, or imaginaries, or a mix of all, the scripts are readily available in music, movies, series, newspapers, magazines, programmes and advertisements, just to mention a few. Clearly, the SRH messages in different media compete with other images and discourses in terms of grabbing the adolescents' attention. As a contested space, the (social) mass media provide room for adolescents to explore other conceptions (and practices) of premarital sexuality and reproduction beyond the quasi-hegemonic ones.

Hanging around in various places in Mtwara Town it is almost impossible not to be confronted with sounds of music and other forms of broadcasting from radio, TV and computers. These are played in shops, restaurants, bars, clubs, video clubs or parlours (*vibanda vya video*), music and movie stores, stationeries and Internet cafes, cars, including commuters (*daladala*), motorbikes and tricycles (*bajaji*). Thanks to what de Bruijn et al. (2009) have called the mobile phone revolution, some people, including young men and women, enjoy music and video clips from their mobile phone as they walk, work or hang out for leisure. At times music from phones can be quite loud, particularly when earphones are not used. In addition, music songs have been set as ring tones, and some of them are really loud. Moreover, it is common to hear individuals, regardless of age singing songs that they have selectively internalised from music.

Along with other genres of music, the *bongo flava*<sup>155</sup> appears to be the most popular music in Tanzania, especially among young people. As suggested by Englert (2008), the growing fame of *bongo flava* in Tanzania has shown the tendency to lean towards songs that deal with everyday life topics such as sexuality, love, lifestyle and partying or clubbing. Likewise, Reuster-Jahn (2007) depicts the power of *bongo flava* in shaping youth identity in Tanzania. In particular, he examines one of the famous *bongo flava* songs, *mikasi* (meaning sex), which conveys the message that enjoying life entails smoking, drinking and having sex. On the other hand, illuminating the potentials in music, Basteien (2009) in his study of adolescent sexuality and the dynamics of communicating HIV/AIDS information in Kilimanjaro, Northern Tanzania, implies that music and musicians in Tanzania reflect and potentially shape AIDS discourses. Extending the focus to the political sphere, Stroeken (2005: 490) posits that *bongo flava* is a space where young people “publicly ventilate social discontents”.

During the fifth visit I specifically discussed with my interlocutors, among other things, what attracted their attention in media. Most adolescents acknowledged music, especially *bongo flava*, followed by *taarabu*, movies,<sup>156</sup> series, sports and specific programmes.

On the other hand, in my conversations parents the latter constantly blamed the media, above all videos. The common phrase in this respect was that “videos have spoiled our children/youth (*video zimeharibu watoto/vijana wetu*).”

However, in some situations, collective watching of movies and series and listening to music at home also involves parents. Indeed, many parents are also fans of certain movies, series and musicians. In other situations, parents would try to censor programmes watched by their children on TV. For example, Amanda’s father is a devoted Muslim, and whenever he was at home Amanda and her siblings would change the channel from music and movies to some other programme, or simply switch off the TV. The father

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<sup>155</sup> *Bongo flava* is also known in Tanzania as *muziki wa kizazi kipya*, meaning music of the new generation. For recent studies of this genre of music and its multiple dimensions, see Englert (2008), Reuster-Jahn (2007), Stroeken (2005), Perullo (2005).

<sup>156</sup> In their study on youth and the translation of films in Tanzania based on fieldwork in Mtwara, Morogoro, Dar es Salaam and Coastal region, Englert and Moreto (2010) confirm that youth constitute the majority audience for local and foreign movies; the latter are translated into Swahili to allow space for the young people to connect popular youth cultures beyond their localities.

would always tune in on a channel with religious teachings or play a cassette, CD or movie of similar content, or switch to the news. On his part, Haule would extend his private studies until his parents went to bed before he watched his pornographic movies. Other adolescents, just to reiterate, watch movies from video-show parlours (*vibanda vya video*), like the young men shown below in Mikindani.

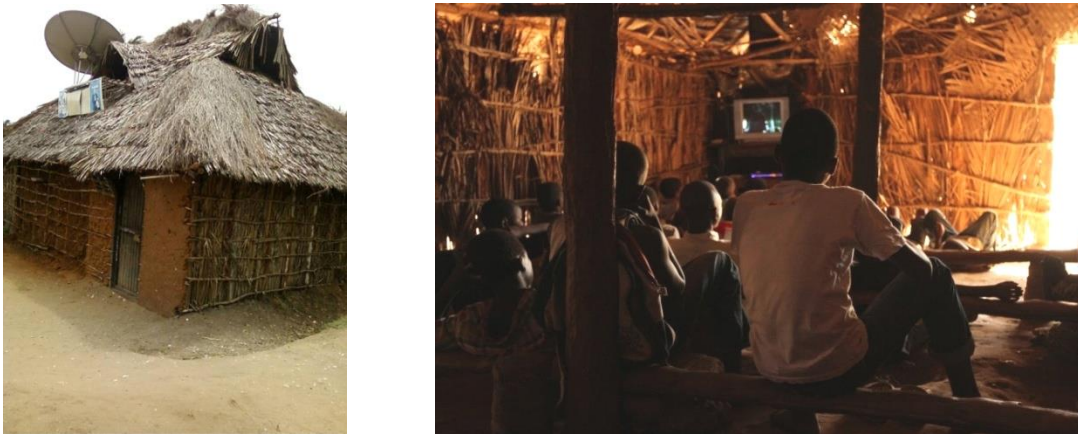


Plate 8.4: The outside and inside view of a video-show parlour in Mikindani ©2010SMBG

In a nutshell, from the mass media, adolescents selectively and creatively explore, adapt, appropriate and reject tastes, trends, styles and practices. In relation to sexuality, besides the SRH messages, young people are exposed have access to narratives and images about what it takes to be in a partnership, how to care for and commit to a partner, what it means to be rejected by a partner (some can be strong, such as *mapenzi yanaua*, meaning “love kills”) and how to express love and affection, among others.

## 8.5 Opening up or seizing opportunities in structural arrangements

Adolescents’ creativity is also evident in the ways in which individual adolescents open up or seize opportunities related to parents’ obligations, visiting relatives, religious values and practices, and structural constraints such as poor living conditions. In this section I show the different “tactics” or forms of “flexible opportunism” that surface in the empirical evidence.

To begin with, parents’ obligations such as a job, which may or may not involve travelling, can open up space for adolescents’ sexual practices. Since it is necessary for

most parents to engage in different economic activities in order to make ends meet, parents are often on the move to and from work. Some parents travel outside Mtwara for business purposes. In both cases, especially for *watoto wa geti kali* (children from restrictive parents), the adolescents take advantage of such moments and occasions. For example, Mfaume considers the mother of his current girlfriend to be very restrictive (*maza wake noma*), so that it is rare for his girlfriend to be away from home after school hours or at the weekend. For that reason, he usually engages in sexual activities especially sexual intercourse with his partner when her mother is travelling to Dar es Salaam. Since the mother is a businesswoman, she is usually away from home up to three times a month.

Similarly, Mustafa (portrait 7.4) is aware that the father of his girlfriend is *Mkali sana* (so strict/restrictive). Above all he is a soldier (*ni mwanajeshi*). However, the girlfriend has gained a kind of sedimented knowledge as to her father's work schedule and she knows that her father usually comes home around 7 pm. She also knows that her father has to work weekends in some weeks. In this respect, Mustafa recounted,

...we often meet on Saturday or Sunday(...) but make sure that at about seven in the evening she must be at home because her parent (the father) is aahaa (...*mida ya saa moja yuko kwao, kwa sababu mzazi wake aahaa*). Eeh, when she comes at about five to seven she should already get back (...) you see she knows at which particular time father will be home and when he is still at work (*akija saa kumi na moja mida ya saa moja anakuwa amerudi nyumbani kwao (...) yaani kuna mda flani anajua baba tayari anakuwa nyumbani mda flani anakuwa baba bado yuko kazini*).

In view of the above, I posit that adolescents introduce temporal orientations to parents' work schedules and movements in and outside home. Theoretically speaking, according to Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 1000), "at micro level, agentic manipulation of time allow actors to engage in repair work, to avoid or (alternatively) initiate conflict, and in myriad ways to advance their own interests."<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> For insights on how family members create space for privacy purposes, see Munro and Madigan (1999) who reflects on the negotiation of space in the family home in the context of Western domestic space of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Furthermore, visiting relatives may provide opportunities for sexual encounters that are either opened up by adolescents or simply seized upon by the latter. Whereas an individual adolescent attempts to open up space by asking permission to pay a visit(s) to relatives, he or she may simply seize the opportunity when asked by parents or requested by relatives. The visits can be in the next street away from home, in a neighbouring town or village and (or) even outside Mtwara region. Apparently, visiting relatives is a valued and cherished practice in Mtwara Town, as probably everywhere in Tanzania.<sup>158</sup> During school holidays and just before certain festivities, adolescents can make extended visits to relatives, including grandparents and siblings. This was also evident during the social survey where we (my field assistants and I) had to visit households, but since it was the holiday season many girls were reported to have gone to Dar es Salaam, Lindi or the rural areas to visit relatives. Alike, some of my informants would also disappear for weeks and parents would tell me, *amesafiri*, meaning that he or she has travelled.

Essentially, visits are primarily meant to enable the adolescents to link up and integrate with other members of the (extended) family. In some situations adolescents' visits are intended to offer assistance to the hosting relative in terms of labour. Yet in other cases, girls from the rural areas or even within town join their sisters or any other relative soon after completing schooling and while waiting for the results or in anticipation of securing a paid job. Likewise, adolescents whose parents are either separated or divorced or simply do not live together for some reason or other, justify frequent visits to the respective parent(s). In specific terms, adolescents either go straight to the hosting relative(s) before they use the rest of the time for sexual encounters with their partners, or the other way round. However, there are also cases where an adolescent simply spends the whole granted time with a sexual partner. For further illustration, I include three examples below.

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<sup>158</sup> Fuglesang (1994) found similar values and practices of visiting relatives in her study of female "youth culture" in the coastal town of Lamu in Kenya.

Zamda, one of Sharobaro's girlfriends (see portrait 6.3), is always "on the move" between her parents who live in different places following their divorce. As pinpointed earlier in the portrait: her father resides in Dar es Salaam, her mother is based in Lindi Town and her paternal grandmother is in Mtwara Town. Accordingly, she often justifies her frequent visits to Mtwara Town to stay with her grandmother. Also, she periodically asks the latter for permission to visit friends and relatives. Zamda uses such opportunities to cohabit with Sharobaro. On her part, Asha, another of Sharobaro's girlfriends, opens up space to cohabit with the Sharobaro by asking permission to visit her sister who lives in Ligula Kati, about ten kilometres from Magomeni where her parents reside.

Equally, Malkia is an adolescent girl currently living with her mother whom she considers very restrictive. Reminiscing on how she created opportunities to meet her boyfriend for sexual intercourse, Malkia noted that she often asked for permission to visit her aunt over the weekend. According to her, she had to carefully manage the time by first going briefly to her aunt and then meeting her boyfriend before getting back home before dark. Likewise, Ashura (6.4 and 7.1), who lived with her grandmother, normally arranged to meet for sex and leisure at her boyfriend's place, especially at weekends. Pointing to how she made this possible Ashura notes,

Over the weekends after I had done my domestic duties (*kama nimejifanyia kazi zangu nyumbani*), I asked for permission that I am going somewhere, then my grandmother would say ok, make sure you come back early (*usichelwe haya uwahi kurudi*) so as to prepare food, then I would go and make sure that I do not delay (*naenda yaani sichelewi narudi*). .....

Similarly, Asia also considers her father as *Mkali*. Since the father has another wife who does not live in the same household, Asia used her father's polygamy rhythm as a space for sexual activities. In particular, before getting pregnant, Asia used to meet her boyfriend at the disco club at night. So she used to sneak out at night after her mother was asleep. This happened on days when her father was not sleeping in the house of his second wife. Normally, he spends some days of the week in another house. In her own words Asia notes, "so I usually used that opportunity (*kwa hiyo huwa ninatumia hiyo nafasi*)."

However, things did not always run smoothly, sometimes her mother would argue (*mama anagomba*) with her when she got back, at times even informing the father who would then punish Asia with a couple of strikes with the cane, but this did not stop her.

Moreover, religious values and activities are also potential spaces for adolescent sexual practices. In most cases, it is in the interest of most parents to see their children engaged in religious activities and complying with righteous teachings and values (except when children deviate or cross over to another faith without the consent of the parents). Generally speaking, this is the case for both Islam and Christianity. The two constitute the major religious communities in Mtwara Town but Islam is the dominant faith; about eighty per cent of the population is Muslim.

However, religious activities such as going to the mosque or church, being an active member in a choir, or fasting open up opportunities for young people to be out-of-doors, meet and interact with (potential) partner(s). Equally important, displaying compliance with religious teachings and values through one's attire and conduct, for example, can provide an individual adolescent with symbolic spaces for the purpose of concealing his or her sexual practices. Asia's sister provides a good example in this respect.

As cited earlier in chapter six, Asia's mother recounted to me the experience she had with Asia's sister who managed to veil her sexual practices under religious activities and gained the reputation of a respectable girl (*mwali mwenye heshima*). Along with the enactment of other socially valued practices, Asia's sister elevated confidence in her mother. The latter was proud of her daughter and even dared to tell people that her daughter was not involved in sexual practices. Just to reiterate, Asia's mother was caught by surprise when she learned that Asia's sister was six months pregnant. Here, the pregnancy unmasked the adolescent in question, but she managed to regain social respect by getting married to the child's father.

Equally important, structural constraints such as poor living conditions can open up spaces that an adolescent may seize on in order to enact sexual practices. In particular, several parents and young people alike point to the fact that poor living conditions sort of account for the enactment and justification of sexual activities, especially among girls. Common phrases in this respect include, "poverty also contributes (*umasikini nao unachangia*)", "so many temptations today (*vishawishi vimekuwa vingi siku hizi*)", "need



to fend for yourself (*inabidi kujitafutia*)” and “with this life of *bongo*<sup>159</sup> (*maisha yenyewe haya ya kibongo*)”, just to mention a few.

What is shared in the aforementioned expressions is the articulation of innocence and irresponsibility. On the one hand, parents try to clear themselves from the blame of being “bad parents” who have failed to fulfill their social roles of providing for and disciplining their daughters according to the societal norms and values. In effect, parents denounce that it is not their fault; instead it is due to poverty and to some degree to *vishawishi* (temptation) and *tamaa* (lust) on the part of the respective adolescent. On the other hand, in order to justify engagement in premarital sexual practices, adolescents project innocence or victimhood along with failure of parents to provide for their “pressing needs”. Thus, the intersections between the parents’ and adolescents’ articulations culminate in overlapping sexual subjectivity that accommodates the adolescents’ sexual practices, at least to a certain degree. A case at hand is that of Amina (portrait 7.8) who considers multiple sexual partnerships as a project to meet her economic needs

Similarly, Leila (portrait 6.5) feels that it is not possible for her (at least at the moment) to be without a sexual partner to provide for her needs. This is because she has no source of income. Thus she uses the resources to provide for her own children and support her mother, who stopped working as a food vendor following a recent childbirth. Justifying her claim in relation to others, Leila noted, “...girls with their own life (meaning a better life) can afford it (...). If I try to follow them my life will end up in a quagmire (...*wanaweza wenye maisha yao...mimi nikisema niwafuate ntaishia kwenye matatizo*).”

## 8.6 Summary

The point of departure in this chapter was the understanding that adolescents’ sexual practices in Mtwara Town constitute a contested field, in that they are simultaneously disapproved of and endorsed by different social actors and institutions. The major objective was thus to examine various ways through which adolescents (actors) temporarily transform pre-established social and cultural configurations. Inherent in the

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<sup>159</sup> The term *bongo* literally means “brain” in Swahili but here it refers to the need of brain in order to make ends meet. According to Englert (2008: 45), “*bongo* is derived from *ubongo*, literally meaning ‘brain’ in Kiswahili, and was originally used as a term to denote Dar es Salaam, a city where brains were said to be needed by its inhabitants in order to survive.” Today, *bongo* means Tanzania and it basically alludes to uncertainties inherent in all spheres of everyday life for the majority of people in the country.

mentioned objective is a unique window towards an empirically grounded analysis of the creativity of adolescents' sexual activities (actions). The main question was therefore how individual adolescents create or seize (social) space for sexual encounters. Inspired by a more reflective conception of (social) space in the context of the practice of everyday life (de Certeau 1984), it has been maintained that social spaces for adolescents' sexual practices are embedded in the common socially and culturally prescribed practices.

To be sure, a closer look at the adolescents' lived experiences has revealed that individual adolescents inter-subjectively find space for sexual encounters with regard to the following: obligations at home, for example, shopping and others; schooling, that is, walks and travels to and from school or *tuition*; social events, that is, holidays, parties and festivities; friendships; mass and social media; social and cultural arrangements referring to religious values, parental obligations and family structures as well as structural constraints such as poor living conditions and arrangements, among others.

## **9. CONCLUSION: THE COMPLEXITY OF ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY**

Beyond the conventional and perhaps dominant discourses that frame adolescent sexuality and reproduction as health and development “problems”, this study set out to examine the complexity inherent in adolescents’ lived sexual and reproductive experiences. In particular, the study has identified multiple (relational) contexts within which adolescents inter-subjectively enact sexual practices and experience their sexual and reproductive lives. It has also delineated reasons and motivations for the (re)establishment and sustenance of various forms of adolescent sexual partnerships. Equally important, the study has sought to understand the manner in which adolescents create or/and seize space(s) for their sexual encounters in socially and culturally acceptable practices.

Most of the literature on adolescent sexuality, especially in the context of sexual and reproductive health in Tanzania and beyond, is dominated by the essentialist, normative, “vulnerability” and “risk” discourses. Consequently, several vital questions in regard to the lived experiences of the adolescents themselves remain unclear. It is against this knowledge gap that the present study sought to address the following two broad questions:

- i. What does sexuality mean for individual adolescents?
- ii. How and why do young people in adolescence go about engaging with multiple social and cultural prescriptions or ideals in relation to their sexual lives?

### ***Main empirical findings***

The main empirical findings of this study are presented and discussed in the four empirical chapters: Sexual intersubjectivity and social well-being; Typology of adolescent sexual partnership formations; Setting up and fostering sexual partnership(s); and Social spaces for adolescent sexual practices. What follows is a synthesis of the empirical findings with respect to the study’s two main research questions.

Adolescent premarital sexuality is a contested practice because it is simultaneously approved of and rewarded, on the one hand, and disapproved of and sanctioned, on the other. Whereas social institutions such as family, schools and religion issue proscriptions against premarital sexual practices, the same is cherished and promoted by other social actors such as peers and social institutions such as the media. Hence, to (dis)engage in adolescent premarital sexual practices entails striking a balance between multiple social expectations (sexual scripts) from varied actors while fulfilling one's aspirations. As such, sexuality not only means different things to different adolescents in different situations or contexts but also for the same individual adolescent in his or her efforts to deal with varied situations over time.

For many adolescents, sexuality entails a constellation of practices cutting across multiple realms of their social and cultural lives, and is therefore not limited to sexual intercourse or physical and psychological dimensions. One of the most profound concerns, which was not only reported but also surfaced in the analysis of the lived sexual and reproductive experiences of adolescents (both males and females), is social respectability. Apparently, sexuality is regarded as a marker or an attribute of social respectability both from the perspectives of parents and peers, but with competing claims. While restraining from sexual practices is considered a sign of respect by parents, engaging in the same allows an adolescent to command respect from his or her peers. In fact, sexuality provides a space to articulate attractiveness, beauty, and femininity on the part of female adolescents, on the one hand, and sexual competence and masculinity for male adolescents, on the other.

With respect to the above, adolescents' premarital sexual lives entail constant struggles to satisfy multiple expectations and aspirations, that is, to live in both worlds – that of the parents as well as that of the peers – while at the same time attending to their personal desires. Indeed, this entails active and creative sorting out and harmonizing inconsistencies and ambiguities; proactive engagement with uncertainties and, where necessary, confronting critical moments. In more practical terms, there are more efforts on the part of the adolescents to conceal or hide (secrecy) their sexual activities and partnership(s) from the sight of parents, teachers and other actors who disapprove of premarital sexual practices. At the same time, adolescents carefully stage their sexual

activities and relationships in order to be seen and acknowledged by their peers in different social spaces.

Furthermore, adolescents' lived sexual and reproductive experiences show that adolescent sexual partnership can take different forms. The study has documented five types of sexual partnerships among adolescents. Some adolescents were in a sexual dyad while living with parents/guardians. Some lived with parents and were handling multiple sexual partnerships. Others were cohabiting with a sexual partner. There were also sexual relationships of adolescent mothers while living with parents/guardians. Equally important to note, a few adolescents were already married and cohabiting, and yet others were renting their own rooms and were in a sexual dyad or had multiple partners.

Interestingly, an individual adolescent can enter, exit, and re-enter different forms of sexual partnerships for various reasons or motives. As portrayed in different cases, from the actor's point of view and based on lived experiences, adolescent sexual practices take on different meanings that often stand in stark contrast to the experts' view on the same. For instance, multiple partnerships serve as a cushion or back-up while simultaneously gaining or maintaining peer recognition, status and/or (especially for girls) material benefits. Additionally, there are situations where multiple partnerships are regarded as a necessary social practice neither explicable in the pure economic terms of transactional sex nor devoid of the economic realities of the respective adolescents (cf. Chernoff 2003, Wamoyi et al. 2011).

Likewise, the findings indicate four possible routes through which adolescents can enact extended cohabitation. Whereas the three of them, namely pregnancy, childbirth, and marriage prospect are interlinked, the last one belongs to a different order, that is, schooling away from home. The latter creates space for individual young people to rent rooms, hence the possibility for cohabiting. What was clear in all cases is that the enactment of cohabitation practices is an intentional act that entails actors' projections into the future in the course of handling concrete situations at the present moment. This is why whenever the actor's expectations are not met with, it is not uncommon to split up and "start a new life". In a sense, the complexity and dynamics of cohabitation practices

challenge the linear and rigid assumptions about adolescents' life courses (see also Johson-Hanks 2006, Cole 2010).

Other striking empirical findings relate to the widely debated teenage motherhood “problem” (see Murcott 1980, Phoenix 1991, Obrist van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997, Wilson and Huntington 2005, Ringsted 2008, Macleod 2011). Looking at the sexual relationships of adolescent mothers living with their parents or a guardian, pregnancy and giving birth as vital events trigger different responsive engagements on the part of an individual adolescent. Teenage motherhood is not necessarily a problem or a vehicle to move the girl in question to womanhood because teenage mothers can articulate womanhood in certain situations, and adolescence in others. In extension, motherhood poses both opportunities and challenges to a respective adolescent, and the latter actively engage with both. Whereas some teenage mothers living with their parents experience relatively limited parental control as regards sexuality, many others continue to feel restricted, as evidenced in their sexual practices. Above all, maintaining sexual respectability for a teenage mother serves many purposes ranging from parental support to maintaining care and provision from one's partner who may or may not be the father of the child(ren) (in relation to prenatal care, see Gross et al. 2013).

Empirical findings on how adolescents go about setting up and fostering sexual partnership(s) further shed light on what sexuality means to an individual adolescent. Basically, adolescents do not simply find themselves in a sexual partnership; rather they go through a series of interrelated processes or steps which trigger imaginations and intentions towards potential sexual partner(ship). Although the processes are highly variable across individuals and partnerships, the adolescents in question often have clear expectations which they strive to pursue. What is important to note is that the expectations that adolescents project into the sexual partnership constitute horizons of hopes and fears (or “risks”) with regard to the sexuality of the respective adolescents. Strikingly, the expectations cut across diverse realms, such as pragmatic and emotional dimensions of care and love, sex and sexual satisfaction, realization of social worth and marital prospects. Consequently, aspects that threaten the actualization of the

aforementioned expectations constitute what adolescent consider as “risks” in their sexual practices.

Although I have grappled with some aspects of the question of how and why young people in adolescence go about engaging with multiple sexual scripts in the foregoing discussion, it is pertinent to specifically highlight some ways and means through which adolescents create or/and seize space for sexual encounters. The lived sexual experiences of the studied adolescents have demonstrated a wide array of ways in which space for adolescent sexual practices is often created by the adolescents themselves. This is in keeping with the expectations that parents, religious institutions, teachers, and other state agencies often control adolescent premarital sexual practices. What is rather fascinating is the fact that adolescents quite often create or seize spaces for practising the seemingly “forbidden” or “unacceptable” social practice in the pre-scribed structures and socially acceptable events, activities, roles and duties.

These social spaces include but are not limited to: domestic obligations, schooling, holidays, parties and festivities, paying visits to relatives, friendship, family structures, living arrangements and conditions, religious values and activities, parents’ obligations, and the (social) media. By and large, the normative proscriptions of the parents and of religious and state institutions as regards premarital sexuality are, so to speak, simultaneously adhered to and manipulated by adolescents. Adolescents struggle to meet their wishes and expectations associated with sexual practices while at the same time not upsetting the societal norms. It is indeed an effort to fit into multiple worlds.

### ***Theoretical and methodological implications***

Theoretically, the empirical findings of this study have several far-reaching implications to our understanding of the complexities inherent in adolescent sexuality, but let me underline at least a few of them as follows:

First and foremost, is the need to revisit dominant representations of adolescents as minors, “victims”, “vulnerable”, and “most at risk group/persons” often without agency

in regard to so-called sexual and reproductive health risks. This study's findings illuminate countless agentive and creative processes in the lived sexual experiences of adolescents. The findings privilege perspectives that allow for approaching individual adolescents as agents in their own right who are capable of (dis)engaging with their realities in meaningful ways (see for example, Johnson-Hanks 2002, 2004, 2006, Christiansen et al. 2006, Cole 2010, Bucholtz 2002, Cole and Durham 2007, and van Reeuwijk 2010). The explanatory power of such approaches rests in the ability to bring together agentive, creative, cultural and structural dimensions of adolescent sexual practices. As such, it goes beyond the mainstream behavioural, cultural and structural deterministic views on adolescents and their sexuality.

Second, is the vital importance of paying attention to the actor's point of view in the analysis of adolescent sexual practices. The common essentialist, normative, and structuralist tendencies to reduce adolescent sexual practices to "deviant" or/and "risk" behaviour are understandable but leave a lot to be desired when juxtaposed with what sexuality means to the adolescent themselves. It is evident from this study that adolescent sexual practices ought to be approached as social actions in which adolescents have stakes/interests (of course with the exception of cases where individuals are forced into sexual practices). Indeed, adolescents' sexual practices make sense in the eyes of the actor as actions geared towards multiple ends and projects. For instance, rather than reducing multiple sexual partnerships to "risk behavior" or promiscuity, adolescents' experiences demand that we approach the practice as one of the responsive engagements in relation to unexpected split-ups, being cheated on and uncertainties concerning the availability and commitment of partners among others (cf. Cole 2010, Chernoff 2003, Wamoyi et al. 2011).

Likewise, adolescents' experiences of cohabitation and motherhood challenge the dominant life-course discourse. Unlike the dominant discourse where the life-course is linear, coherent and irreversible, adolescents' lived experiences portray that an individual's life-course is complex, full of incoherencies, and also reversible (see also Johnson-Hanks 2006, Cole 2010, Phoenix 1991, Ringsted 2008, Macleod 2011).

Third, the study shed light on the often neglected dimension of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, namely social well-being. Contrary to the dominant view of what



constitute risk dimensions in adolescent sexuality (HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, etc.), the study found that adolescents are more concerned with maintaining a valued sense of being. In a fundamental way, most of what adolescents count as “risks” or fears associated with their sexuality belongs to the realm of social well-being. This is consistent with a recent strand of research in medical anthropology and beyond (see for example, van Reeuwijk 2010, Cole 2010, Steuer 2012, Moyer 2012). What is perhaps more intriguing is that adolescents concurrently struggle for social respectability from competing perspectives of parents and peers. This contradicts a body of literature that tends to assume that adolescents only pay attention to either parents’ or peers’ perspectives (see Rweyemamu 2007, Sekiwunga and Whyte 2009).

The main shortcoming in the afore mentioned view is the failure to comprehend and appreciate the inter-subjective nature of social life in general and (adolescents’) sexual relationships in particular (see Gammeltoft 2002, Jackson 1998). Without this understanding, I argue, it is almost impossible to adequately grasp why and how individual adolescents strive for multiple and concurrent social belonging or membership (van Binsbergen 2007). To address this conceptual caveat requires, among other things, a sound theorization of agency as the one adopted in this study (see also van Reeuwijk 2010), one that incorporates all dimensions of human agency and does not privilege the individual at the expense of the structures and viceversa.

Fourth, the functionalistic anthropological/sociological tendencies to explain adolescent sexual practices in terms of (poor) parenting style (see Sekiwunga and Whyte 2009, Wamoyi et al. 2011b) can be good to think along, but do not sufficiently accommodate inter-subjective dimensions of adolescent sexual practices. This is because they overlook the interplay between individual adolescents’ creativity and societal forces. In effect, such arguments flip back to the essentialist vision of home and school as “safe zones” as cautioned by De Boeck and Honwana (2005). One way of addressing this weakness is to see the home and its associated domestic obligations assigned to the adolescents, along with parental obligations, as potential spaces for sexual encounters, as established in this study. Here, in the manner of Blumer (1966), socialization (by family, media, religion

and peers) should be seen as building the capacity of the respective adolescent to fit into the lives of others while social control becomes self-control.

Fifth, as agents in their own right, adolescents creatively appropriate seemingly new social and cultural values. Be it through education or mass media, adolescents selectively pay more attention to certain aspects than others, depending on how they fit into their “lifeworld”. As such, they are capable of introducing alternative possibilities for sexual encounters, for instance, with the help of schooling, religious values and mass media. Accordingly, exposure to, for example, education, SRH messages or information is not adequate to allow for sweeping generalizations about actual social actions of the respective individuals. As Johnson-Hanks (2006) so convincingly contends it is important to understand the actors’ intentions beyond mere correlates.

Last but not the least, the study calls for a fresh anthropological understanding of “friendship” (Desai and Killick 2010) in adolescence, beyond the psychological stereotype of “peer pressure”. Unpacking the latter is the first step, in so far as that what is usually dubbed as peer pressure actually entails inter-subjective engagements, essential for social well-being from the view point of the respective adolescents. Apparently, friendship is one of the critical forms of social relationships that need to be understood in order to arrive at a compelling contextualization of most adolescents’ sexual activities.

Fundamentally, the above conceptual view of adolescents and their sexual practices is not without some methodological implications. The insistence on the need to understand adolescents’ sexual practices from the actors’ viewpoints is beyond the scope of positivistic methods such as surveys that have so far been dominant in sexual and reproductive health research (see also Baum 1995, Price and Hawkins 2002). In the context of anthropological research, the study points to the importance of ethnographic practices that pay attention to both the inter-subjective life of the adolescents and inter-subjective engagements between the ethnographer and the “other” (including adolescents, parents, relatives, teachers, and religious leaders, among other relevant social actors). This epistemological stance is consistent with the current discussions about ethnographic practices in anthropology in relation to the ongoing social transformations in both

Western and non-Western societies (see also Jackson 1998, Marcus and Fischer 1986/1999, Marcus 2001, Denzin 2002).

The use of multiple methods to generate data from multiple sources (both primary and secondary) is necessary for a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in adolescent sexuality. However, only a single encounter with adolescents in a particular setting for interviews or/and FGDs may not be sufficient to understand the dynamics of adolescent sexuality (see for example, Rweyemamu 2007). This study has established that it takes several encounters with adolescents in order to generate rich data about their lived sexual experiences. The use of peers as field assistants is vital in bridging many barriers associated with the relationship between the researcher and the adolescents (see also Price and Hawkins 2002). Above all, participation in some aspects of adolescents' lives not only opens spaces for multiple encounters but also enables the researcher to transcend beyond what is stated by the adolescents and other actors, to grasping what actually happens on the ground (see also Spittler 2001, Förster et al. 2011). Similarly, lessons learnt from this study further suggest the importance of combining quantitative methods (survey) and ethnographic practice but the latter should inform the former to allow for meaningful triangulation.

### ***Policy implications***

Due to the fact that I have critically engaged with dominant sexual and reproductive health discourses that inform the respective policies and practices, several policy implications can be drawn from this study. Although the promotion of adolescents' sexual and reproductive health has been at the top of the national agenda in Tanzania in line with the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, the empirical findings of this study demonstrate that most of the desired policy outcomes are still very far distant. This corroborates the often unpopular findings reported in the literature on adolescent sexual and reproductive practice in relation to the popular public health and development discourses (see Dilger 2003, Bujra 2000, Wight et al. 2006, van Reeuwijk 2010, Halley 2012). The following are some of the issues that this

study considers to be vital in accounting for and addressing the limited policy and programme achievements on the ground:

To begin with, I mention the fact that sexual and reproductive health policies' and programmes' imaginations often do not necessarily reflect the desires and everyday realities of the targeted young people. It is therefore important to not only acknowledge the aforesaid facts but also address or/and respect the real needs of adolescents both in policy and practice. For instance, although policies and programmes promise better education as a means to "better life", most adolescents do not have access to better education but would still wish for a "better life" through other means, such as multiple sexual partnerships and marriage (in the case of female adolescents). Thus, efforts to promote adolescents' sexual and reproductive health ought to be informed by the nuances of adolescents' sexual and reproductive actions and, in extension, by the adolescents' point of view.

Linked to the above is the tendency to universalize, homogenize, objectify and decontextualize adolescents and their sexual practices, using popular frames or categories (often derived from the West) shared among policy makers and practitioners in public health and development programmes. Although it is good to classify adolescents according to certain frames or categories in order to enable easy interventions, to assume that all individual adolescents and their diverse sexual practices fit into the narrow categories is to assume too much. This is because in real life adolescents are a heterogeneous and diverse social group, and their sexual practices are not only subjective and dynamic, but also context specific.

Although the concepts of sexual and reproductive health have been broadened to include social dimensions, at least in theory, since the Cairo Conference in 1994, in practice, biomedical, psychological, and epidemiological frameworks continue to shape the health and development discourse. Evidence from this study suggests that it is high time to seriously consider the social and cultural dimensions of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, particularly those aspects which contribute to the sense of social

well-being (in its broad sense) as discussed in the present thesis. What this simply means is that the social dimensions of sexual and reproductive health should be accorded due weight rather than the common practice of treating the same as secondary, soft and peripheral matters (see also Obrist 2006, Nichter 2008, Cole 2010, Steuer 2012). In extension, this would mean giving more room to theory and research that is committed towards unearthing the complexity inherent in sexual and reproductive practices.

### *Areas for future studies*

Both theoretical debates and empirical findings discussed in this study attest the multifaceted nature of adolescent sexuality and reproduction. In order to push for further theoretical reflections and generate achievable policy strategies with regards to adolescent sexual and reproductive health, there is need for more case studies at the local level to allow for a nuanced contextualization of the practices. The following are some of the areas for future research in the field:

- i. Intergenerational relationships and how they play out in adolescent sexual practices. In particular, there is limited literature on the perspectives and experiences of parents and grandparents in regard to what it means and takes to control adolescent sexuality and reproduction in Tanzania today.
- ii. The role of friendship in adolescent sexuality is often approached in a paradoxical sense of “peer pressure” and “peer education” especially with regard to sexual and reproductive health interventions. However, a more differentiated understanding is required to tease out numerous ways in which friendship as a way of relating tends to shape adolescent sexual practices, on the one hand, and how they (friendships) are also shaped by adolescents’ sexuality, on the other.
- iii. The resilient practices in adolescent sexuality and reproduction, particularly with regard to what counts as risk(s) from the perspectives of adolescents themselves. Despite recent interest to understand adolescent sexual and reproductive health related practices from a resilient perspective, there is a dearth of ethnographic studies in this area.
- iv. The prominence of social media in the everyday life of young people is hard to ignore in contemporary Tanzania. How young people in adolescence actively and

- creatively interact with and through various types of social media in regard to their sexuality is a crucial research question for further empirical investigation.
- v. The bodily dimensions of adolescent sexuality and how the latter is embodied is yet another interesting research area which has not received due attention by anthropologists. How is the body of an adolescent constructed in relation to sexuality and reproduction? To what extent adolescents' bodies constitute means or/and spaces for countless adolescent sexual practices are among the key issues to be explored.
  - vi. Many intervention programmes on adolescent sexual and reproductive health continue to be implemented in Tanzania. To what extent and how individual adolescents appropriate the interventions are open and compelling empirical questions.

There is no doubt, therefore, that adolescents and their sexual and reproductive practices have been and will continue to be “subjects” and “objects” for research and interventions. In spite of the dominant tendencies in policy and scholarly discourses to represent adolescents' sexual practices in universal, essentialist and normative terms, sexuality means different things to different young people coming of age in the rapidly changing urban settings of Southern Tanzania. Being highly contested social practices, adolescents' lived sexual and reproductive experiences depict young people in adolescence as social actors involved in complex inter-subjective engagements with multiple and competing sexual scripts.

## 10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## 11. APPENDIX

### 11.1: Brief biographies of adolescents cited in the thesis

Female Adolescents			
<i>Age, education</i>	<i>Age, education</i>	<i>Living arrangement</i>	<i>Sexual/Reproductive status</i>
1. Somoe	-16 years of age - In secondary school	-Living with her two parents -Her father is very strict/restrictive	-In her second sexual partnership but has not engaged in sexual intercourse -Has had multiple partners
2. Mwajabu	-18 years of age -Completed ordinary secondary education	-Lived with her sister while in secondary school but later rented her own room	-Has been in several casual sexual partnership after her first two stable relationships
3. Malkia	-19 years -Completed ordinary secondary education and basic computer training	-Living with her mother after the death of her father	-In her third sexual partnership -She was cheated on and dropped by the first partner -She rejected the second partner for his failure to provide and care for her
4. Asia	-19 years of age -Completed primary education	-Living with her parents	-In her third stable sexual relationship -Got pregnant with her second partner -An adolescent mother -Has casual multiple partners
5. Ashura(portrait 6.4, 7.1)	-18 years of age -Completed primary education	-Cohabited with the father of her daughter before she went back to live with her late grandmother	-Has been in one sexual partnership -Got pregnant in her last few months of primary schooling -An adolescent mother
6. Leila (portrait 6.5)	-19 years of age -Dropped out of primary school (std four)	-Lived with her mother before she cohabited with the father of her third child	-Has had multiple and concurrent sexual partners -A mother of three children
7. Aisha	-19 years of age	-Living with her aunt	-In her second sexual

(portrait 6.6)	-Completed primary education		partnership -A mother of one child
8. Zuena (portrait 6.7)	-18 years of age -Completed primary education	-Living with her parents	-Has one sexual partnership -A mother of one child
9. Amina (6.8)	-19 years of age -Completed primary education	-Living with her mother and stepfather	-Has multiple and concurrent sexual partners -A mother of one child
10. Mwanaidi	-18 years of age -Did not complete primary education	-Living with her parents	-Has one sexual partner -Mother of one child
11. Wema (Portrait 6.9)	-17 years of age -Completed primary education	-Living with her husband	-Married by her first sexual partner -Mother of one child
12. Anna (6.10)	-18 years of age -Completed ordinary secondary education	-Lived with her sister before -Rented her own room when her sister got married	-Has had two sexual partners in her sexual life
13. Salma	-16 years of age -In secondary school	-Living with her father	-Has multiple sexual partners
14. Maimuna	-19 years of age -completed primary education	-Living with her sister	-Has one sexual partner -Has had been in several sexual relationships -A mother of one child
15. Habiba (Portrait 7.2)	-18 years of age -Completed ordinary secondary education	-Lives with her two sisters -Temporarily cohabit with his sexual partners	-Has multiple and concurrent sexual partners
16. Zamda	-19 years of age -Completed ordinary secondary education	-Moving between her mother and paternal grandmother -Temporarily cohabiting	-Has one sexual partner
17. Asha	-18 years of age -Completed ordinary secondary	-Moving between her parents and sister -Temporarily cohabiting	-Has multiple and concurrent sexual partners

	education		
18. Amanda	-15 years of age -In secondary school	Living with her parents	-Has one sexual partner
19.Mwanaisha	-17 years of age -Vocational training	-Lived with her aunt before she got married	-Got married by the partner who impregnated her
<b>Male Adolescents</b>			
1. Haule	-16 years of age -In secondary school	-Living with very strict/restrictive parents	-Forced to abandon his first sexual partner by his parents -Established another partnership
2. Mfaume	-17 years of age -In his final year of ordinary secondary education	-Living with his grandmother	-Has had three sexual partners, one at a time
3. Mustafa (Portrait 7.4)	-17 years of age -In secondary school	-Living with his uncle following the death of both his father and mother	-Had multiple partners before he decided to remain with one sexual partner.
4. Hussein	-17 years of age -In secondary school	-Living with his parents	-Had one sexual partner before breaking up with her -Did not have sex with his partner
5. Mahazi	-19 years of age -Finished primary education	-Living with parents	-Has multiple and concurrent sexual partners
6. Abdul	-17 years of age -Completed ordinary secondary education	-Living with his mother	-Had one girlfriend
7. Musa	-19 years of age -Completed primary education	Living with parents	-Had one girlfriend
8. Ahmed	-16 years of age	-Living with parents	-Had multiple partners

	-In secondary school		
9. David (portrait 6.1)	-17 years of age -In secondary school	-Lived with his mother and uncle before he joined his mother	-Shifted from one sexual partnership to multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships
10. Kaziga (portrait 6.2)	-17 years of age -In secondary school	-Living with his father and stepmother	-Have multiple and concurrent sexual partners but considers one of them as “permanent”
11. Sharobaro (6.3)	-20 years of age -Completed ordinary secondary education	-Living with his father and stepmother	-Have multiple and concurrent sexual partners -Temporarily cohabit with two of his partners
12. Ramadhan	-17 years of age -In secondary school	-Living with his parents	-Has multiple and concurrent sexual partners



## 11.2: Research Design that guided the survey

### *Questionnaire on Reproductive Resilience Related to Teenage Pregnancy*

**Background:** The questionnaire builds on the social resilience framework developed during NCCR North-South phase 2.

**Approach:** A cross-sectional survey with a random sample of all teenagers between 15-19 years (according to WHO: older adolescents). Interest in learning more about the following outcome: "those who are not pregnant /delivered already but coped well" and "those who are pregnant/did not cope well". Coping well with pregnancy and not being pregnant = "success" whereas having experienced a teenage pregnancy and not coped well = "failure".

**Sample size:** Rule of thumb consideration: 500 in rural areas; 750 in urban areas (we can not do real sample size calculations here because this is not a clinical trial testing an intervention where we want to see if there is a statistical difference in pregnancies in a control vs. exposed group. A case-control approach would be too complicated).

**Random-sampling:** A two-stage sampling approach will be applied, starting with cluster sampling. Using a map of the different administrative levels of the city (for example: Dar es Salaam is divided in 11 divisions, 73 wards and 313 mitaa) (1) we can sample 4 wards, and within each ward 3 mitaa, (2) in a next step do a census of all the households in the mitaa to identify households with girls 15-19 years of age, (3) then we select a sample of the identified women and interview them.

#### **Hypothesis:**

1. There is a significant relationship between the outcome (dependent variable: coped competently by either not being pregnant or by having dealt well with pregnancy) and (i) capacity, (ii) context as well as (iii) capitals (independent variables).
2. There is a significant relationship between capacities (dependent variable) and capitals (independent variable). In other words: being able to mobilise different capitals leads to increased capacities to deal with the threat of teenage pregnancy.
3. There is a significant relationship between capacities (dependent variable) and context (independent variable). In other words: The context influences the capacities to deal with the threat of teenage pregnancy.

### List of variables, hypothesized relationships and questions

Variables	Sub-variables	Hypothesis	Question
<b>1 Context</b>			
	Age, location, level of education, religion, wealth of family, family status (do parents still live together?), relationship status	A high resilience score is associated with supportive context factors such as a high level of education, wealthy family background, parents living together, living in an urban setting, being in a relationship.	
<b>2 Capitals *</b>			
* The questions follow the same approach: first question is binary (yes/no); second one numerical (no. of people); third one provides information about the options. The answer categories are not yet included but will be in the questionnaire.			
2.1 Social	Relationship to significant other	A high resilience score is associated with having someone to turn to.	Do you have someone you can turn to in case you have questions/need support related to sexuality/teenage pregnancy/delivery/neonatal care?
		A high resilience score is associated with having a high number of persons to turn to.	How many people can you turn to?
		A high resilience score is associated with having mainly family members and peers to turn to.	Whom do you turn to?

Variables	Sub-variables	Hypothesis	Question
2.3 Cultural	→ According to P. Bourdieu: embodied (personal dispositions and habits), objectified (knowledge and tradition stored in material forms) and institutionalized (educational qualification)	A high resilience score is associated with having access to cultural capital such as information material on sexuality and teenage pregnancy.	Do you have access to other information sources such as magazines, TV, radio, peer-educators etc. in order to learn about sexuality and teenage pregnancy?
		A high resilience score is associated with having access to many different sources of information on sexuality and teenage pregnancy.	How many different sources do you have access to?
		A high resilience score is associated with having access to SRH intervention based information material such as Femina Hip magazines, Fema talk show, peer educators etc.	What kind of sources do you use?
2.2 Economic	Relationship to significant other	A high resilience score is associated with having someone to turn to for financial support.	Do you have someone you can turn to in case you need money for sexuality/pregnancy and delivery related costs such as contraceptives, health services, medication, food or clothes?
		A high resilience score is associated with having a	How many people can you turn to?

Variables	Sub-variables	Hypothesis	Question
		high number of persons to turn to.	
		A high resilience score is associated with having family members and peers to turn to.	Whom do you turn to?
2.4 Symbolic	Acceptance within social environment	A high resilience score is associated with feeling accepted by the social environment.	Do you feel accepted within your social environment?
	Social reputation	A high resilience score is associated with striving for a good reputation.	Do you actively strive for a good reputation in terms of sexual behaviour/dealing with pregnancy and baby?
<b>3 Capacity</b>			
3.1 Psycho-social resilience: personal dispositions/attitudes  selection of key dispositions found in resilience scales	Religion	A high resilience score is associated with a high capacity score.  A high capacity score is	Do spiritual & religious beliefs help you to abstain from sexual relationships/to protect yourself during sexual relationships/to cope with health risks before, after and during delivery?
	Positive attitude	associated with a high level of capitals and a favouring context (high level of	Do you believe that you can successfully manage to avoid teenage pregnancy/health risks for you and your baby?
	Social skills	education, parents living together, wealthy background etc.).	Do you have the ability to establish and maintain relationships to people, who you can ask for advice related to sexuality, pregnancy/having a baby?  Do you have the ability to organise support related to issues around sexual behaviour/pregnancy/having

Variables	Sub-variables	Hypothesis	Question
			a baby in case you need it?
3.2 Life skills see existing life skills courses/SRH knowledge	Confidence		Do you dare to speak out when someone approaches you in a sexual way and you do not want it?
	SRH knowledge		Do you know how to protect yourself from pregnancy?
	SRH knowledge		Do you have sexual and reproductive rights?
	SRH behaviour		Do you decide freely if, when and with whom you want to have sex?
4 Outcome:			
	Pregnancy status		Are you currently pregnant?  Have you been pregnant before?
Development of a Resilience Score: someone is resilient, if 80% of all questions below are answered with yes			
	➔ Not pregnant:  Coping with risk of teenage pregnancy		Would you/do you protect yourself from pregnancy by using contraceptives such as condom, pill etc.?
			Can you/have you mobilised any social support in order to actively protect yourself from teenage pregnancy?
			Did you manage to mobilise these resources successfully?
			Can you/have you mobilised any economic resources in order to actively protect yourself from teenage pregnancy?
			Did you manage to mobilise them successfully?
			Can you/have you actively looked for other sources of information on teenage

Variables	Sub-variables	Hypothesis	Question
			pregnancy, contraceptives etc. in order to protect yourself from teenage pregnancy?
			Did you manage to get the information you were looking for?
	→ Pregnant:  Coping with pregnancy/delivery and neonatal care		Did you try to continue your schooling or start/continue any other training after pregnancy?  (In Tanzania, pregnant girls are often not allowed to go back to school)
			Did you make regular use of health services in order to guarantee your health and the health of your baby?
			Have you mobilised any economic resources in order to guarantee your health and the health of your baby?
			Did you manage to mobilise them successfully?
			Did you mobilise any social resources in order to guarantee your health and the health of your baby?
			Did you manage to mobilise these resources successfully?
			Have you actively looked for other sources of information on teenage pregnancy, delivery and neonatal care that help you to guarantee your health and the health of your baby?
			Did you manage to get the information you were looking for?

### 11.3: Consent form for adolescents

#### CONSENT FORM

We are interviewing girls and boys aged 15-19 years to be part of the research project titled 'Sexual and reproductive health of adolescents in Tanzania', carried out by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the University of Dar es Salaam in collaboration with the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Switzerland. The focus of the study is to get a better understanding about what sexuality, family and having children means for adolescents.

The participation in the study is completely voluntary. The participant will not be forced to answer questions that she does not want to answer and may end the interview at any time you want to. All information collected in the course of the study will remain confidential.

In case you have any questions, concerns or comments related to this study feel free to contact the following people who will provide you with the necessary assistance.

Dr. Constanze Pfeiffer (Project Leader)

OR

Richard Faustine Sambaiga (PhD student)

University of Dar es Salaam

Department of Sociology (6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 604 - Tower Block)

P.O.BOX 35043,

Dar es Salaam

Mobile No. 0769 380 281 OR 0787 809 378

We would greatly appreciate your participation in this study.

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I agree participating in an interview conducted within the frame of the research project titled 'Reproductive health of adolescents in Tanzania', carried out by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the University of Dar es Salaam in collaboration with the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Switzerland.

Signature of participant or his/her legal representative as proof of consent for interviews

.....

Date: .....

Place:

.....

